

# APPEAL to the PUBLIC:

IN FOUR PARTS.

CONTAINING,

Some general OBSERVATIONS;

A PREFACE, wherein the Nature and Seasons of public Covenanting are explained upon Scripture-principles, in order to satisfy the scrupulous about the expediency of renewing our solemn Covenants at present;

A DEFENCE of solemn Covenanting, in opposition to that Preface, by the Rev. Mr Adam Gib; and,

A DISPLAY of the Spirit, Principles, and Fallacy of the said Defence.

By ARCHIBALD HALL,

The AUTHOR of that PREFACE.

*He that doth truth, cometh to the light, John iii. 21.*

*Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath, Prov. xxi. 24.*

EDINBURGH:

Printed by GAVIN ALSTON,

Foot of the W. Fish-market Close.

[Price 1s. 6d.]

## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE leading principles, which run through the following Preface and Display, will be set in a fuller and easier light, in a work planned on the general subject of COVENANTING, which is now preparing for the press.—In the mean time, the writer thought it not amiss to offer some remarks on Mr Gib's Defence of covenanting, in a separate performance; that he may have no temptation to enter into a contest with any particular adversary, while he is considering that important point. He cannot expect to please all parties by any thing he can say on that subject, and therefore he shall rest entirely satisfied with the approbation of his own conscience, concerning the integrity of his intentions, while he endeavours to serve his generation, by explaining and recommending the cause of God and truth, in opposition to some dangerous misapprehensions of the Antiburghers and others, on the nature and design of religious vows.





# AN APPEAL to the PUBLIC, &c.

## PART I.

### *Some general OBSERVATIONS.*

"IT must be granted," says a celebrated author, the manner of *proving by affirmation* is of an extraordinary nature; but however it has its end with a set of readers for whom it is adapted. One part of the world knows not with what assurance another part can express itself. They imagine a *reasonable creature* will not have the face to say any thing which has not some shadow of reason to support it; and run implicitly into the snare which is laid for good-nature by these daring authors of definitive sentences upon bare assertion.—It is common with one sort of critics, to shew an author means *differently* from what he really did; and then to prove, that the meaning *which they find out* for him is good for nothing.—Some call that low, which others call natural. Every thing has two handles, and the critic who sets himself to censure all he meets, is under an obligation still to lay hold on the worst of them.—We acknowledge it a fine piece of satire, when there is *folly* in a passage, to lay it open in the way by which it *naturally* requires to be exposed: do this handsomely, and the author is deservedly a jest. If, on the contrary, you dress a passage which was not *originally* foolish, in the highest humour of ridicule, you only frame something which the author himself might laugh at, without being more nearly concerned than another reader.

"Vanity loves to gratify itself by the repetition of what it esteems to be written with spirit, and even when we repeat it ourselves, provided another hears us. Hence Zoilus \* has been

\* "Zoilus was born at Amphipolis, a city of Thrace, during the time in which the Macedonian empire flourished.—He was fond of speaking ill, diligent to sow dissention, and from the constant bent of his thought, had obtained that sort of readiness for slander or reproach, which is esteemed wit by the light opinion of some, who take the remarks of ill-nature for an understanding of mankind, and the abrupt lashes of rudeness for the spirit of expression. This at last grew to such a height in him, that he became careless of concealing it; he threw off all reserves and managements in respect of others, and the passion so far took the turn of a frenzy, that being one day asked, Why he spoke ill of every one? It is, says he, *because I am not able to do them ill, though I have so great a mind to it.* Such extravagant declarations of his general enmity, made men deal with him as with the creature he affected to be."

been followed by a magisterial set of men, who quote themselves, and swell their new performances with what they admire in their former treatises. This is a most extraordinary knack of arguing, whereby a man can never want a proof, if he be allowed to become an authority for his own opinion.

" Foolish critics write even things they themselves can answer, to shew how much they can write against an author. They act unfairly, that they may be sure to be sharp enough; and trifle with the reader, in order to be voluminous. It is needless to wish them the return they deserve: their disregard to candour is no sooner discovered, but they are forever banished from the eyes of men of sense.—It is too heavy a task for some critics to sway our rational judgments by rational inferences. A pompous pretence must occasion admiration, the eyes of mankind must be obscured by a glare of pedantry, that they may consent to be led blindfold, and permit that an opinion should be dictated to them, without demanding that they should be reasoned into it.

" *Zoilus*, who hates fables, can rejoice in them when they flatter his envy. He appears at the head of the squadron of critics, in the full spirit of one utterly devoted to a party; with whom truth is a lie, or as bad as a lie, when it makes against him; and false quotations pass for truth, or as good as truth, when they are necessary to a cause.—But what assurance can such as *Zoilus* have, that the world will ever be convinced against an established reputation, by such people whose faults in writing are so very notorious? who judge against rules, affirm without reasons, and censure without manners? who quote themselves for a support of their opinions, found their pride upon a learning in trifles, and their superiority upon the claims they magisterially make? who write of beauties in a harsh stile, judge of excellency with a lowness of spirit, and pursue their desire to decry it with every artifice of envy?—There is no disgrace in being censured, where there is no credit to be favoured."

These observations are drawn from nature, and shew a deep acquaintance with the genius, temper, and disposition of mankind. They are extracted from Dr *Parnell's* animadversions on "the remarks of *Zoilus* upon *Homer's* battle of the "frogs and mice:" and whatever Mr *Gib* or I may wish or

He is said to have been burnt at *Smyrna*, his own compositions being lighted to set the pile on fire. "If these who follow *Zoilus* meet not the same severities of fate, because they come short of his indefatigableness, or their object is not so universally the concern of mankind; they shall nevertheless meet a proportion of it in the inward trouble they give themselves, and the outward contempt others sling upon them." *Parnell's* life of *Zoilus*.

expect,

expect, it is very probable our readers will examine and judge our performances by the test of common sense. It is a foolish presumption to suppose, that the vulgar are not qualified to *criticise* the *reasonings*, the *candour*, and the *spirit* of our writings. Prudence whispers to us, that the greatest merit we can have with the public is, to make a virtue of necessity, to submit where we cannot compel the world to approve, and to bring the clearest evidence we are able to the understanding of our readers, without affecting to preclude their right to judge for themselves between us both. The love of liberty is so natural to mankind, that we have reason to believe, they will not be quite so obliging as we would desire: they will not resign the privilege of an uninfluenced jury; perhaps they will even venture to claim the province of an impartial judge. We cannot well hope for any great indulgence, if they FIND us guilty of wilful rebellion against their own established rules of sound criticism, contained in Dr Parnell's observations, which may be called, the *elements of common law for the court of common sense*.

It will naturally be supposed by some readers, that an appeal to the history of *Zoilus*, who rendered himself deservedly infamous by his *envy* against the greatest characters, and particularly against *Homer*, is an insufferable piece of pride, as it can never be thought I am an enviable character, and it cannot be once imagined, I would chuse to profess to be a follower of *Zoilus*; and therefore I must be represented as making a claim to *Homer's* merit, while I attribute *Zoilus's* envy to Mr *Gib*.—But people sometimes “make a senseless, “but malicious guess” at things, as Mr *Gib* says I have done in another case. I do not pretend to any considerable merit, and I am sure Mr *Gib* does not look upon me with envy; but our author tells us, “*Zoilus* was filled with pride, scorn, anger, vexation, envy, and whatever could torment him.” This entire character is what *Parnell* exposes as an unsocial and detestable thing. The question to be tried is not, Whether Mr *Gib* or Mr *Hall* be the worst man? but whether truth, candour, and argument, are to be found with either the one or the other of us? So far as we are found criminal, let both of us, in proportion to the degrees of our guilt respectively, fall under the same condemnation. *Zoilus's* temper and manners constitute a sufficient title to his punishment,—“inward trouble,” and—“outward contempt.”

But if Mr *Gib* hesitates about the authority or the application of Dr *Parnell's* principles, I heartily consent to substitute *his own* in their room: nay, I earnestly wish his friends would judge impartially concerning both *him* and *me*, by a



fair and candid application of the principles laid down in the following *extract*, wherein I shall faithfully preserve his spirit, and make as few alterations in his very words as possible. *N. B.* This extract is only for the use of Mr Gib and his friends.

"When a train of gross falsehood, calumnious misrepresentation, or invidious misconstruction, runs through a performance, there is an higher evidence of the matter than can arise from any testimony of witnesses *that it is so*: there is even some intrinsic and infallible evidence in the performance itself, *that it must be so*; or that the case cannot, even by the utmost rational stretch of charity, be supposed otherwise. This may appear, if it be considered,

"1. Whether the author represents a variety of reasonings, as to which he does not satisfy himself with giving what he takes to have been the substance of them; but pretends to give the very words, sometimes at considerable length. Now, if, as to matter of fact, there is not any one [or not many] of these representations, but what is very unfair, it is *utterly improbable* that the writer can be capable of telling the truth fairly and impartially.

"2. Whether he treats persons of a religious character with such language as greatly exceeds all bounds of *decency* and *duty*, even towards the meanest inferiors. If he does so, who can rationally expect a true and fair account of matters through the channel of the *grossest indecency* and *undutifulness*?

"3. Whether he charges his adversary with *gross dissimulation*, *glaring dissingenuity*, and *Jesuitical duplicity*. It must be *grossly absurd* (says Mr Gib) to suppose the worst person in the world capable of such opposite dispositions at the same time, as are implied in these imputations; each of these dispositions in full strength, and the force of the one no way impairing that of the other. But if an author charges these things upon his adversaries, who can expect a true and fair account of matters through the channel of *gross absurdity*?

"4. Whether the whole strain of the performance be *VIRULENTLY ABUSIVE*. If the general current of the language be of the *RAILING* order; deeply drenched in a venom compounded of *HAUGHTINESS* and *FURY*, *PROFANE MOCKERY*, and *SCORNFUL CONTEMPT*, who can rationally expect a true and fair account of matters through the channel of such *VIRULENT RAILING* and *ABUSE*?

"5. Whether a great part of the performance runs upon the *uncharitable* and *presumptuous* order of searching hearts. If he deal deep in judging upon the inward springs, principles,



ciples, and motives of the actions of those against whom he declaims; yea, if he presume to judge most expressly what their *mind is filled with*, [or what their conscience cannot but say], who can rationally expect a true and fair account of matters, through the channel of such *uncharitable and impious presumption*?"

He then sums up the force of this demonstrative evidence, which serves to convict and confute every performance that makes an ill-founded pretension to truth, and candour, and fair reasoning. "In a word, can a spirit of *utter improbability*, of the *grossest indecency and undutifulness*, of *gross absurdity*, of *virulent railing and abuse*, of *uncharitable and impious presumption*;—can this be a spirit of truth?"

Mr Gib lays down these *canons of criticism* as an *infallible* test of truth and fair-dealing, in the *Preface* to his *Refuge of lies swept away*, &c. † He has proved them in the dispute he maintained against three of his elders; and having communicated them to the public, I request *himself* and *his friends* to bring *my preface*; his *appendix*, containing a *defence of solemn covenanting*, in opposition to that preface; and the *present performance*, to that *touch-stone*: and I further intreat *them* to pronounce an impartial sentence upon the character, spirit, and demerit, of each and all of these several pieces.

To the rest of my readers I would rather recommend what Dr Parnell, one of the ablest judges of fine writing, has said on the subject, in the extract I have made from his works. He has given the best account I remember to have seen any where, of the *little arts* used by *some* authors, to support a favourite cause, and defame a stubborn adversary. He understood human nature, he knew the world, and he has shewn himself an adept in the art of drawing a moral picture. Every saucy, imperious, quibbling, angry *sophister* is his *original*: and the world will judge of the *likeness*, whatever pains we take to procure a favourable sentence at that bar.

To the end they may be enabled to judge with a greater degree of *certainty* and *understanding*, I have yielded to the mortifying office of publishing my own infamy; by giving a faithful transcript of the whole *second part* of Mr Gib's *first appendix* to the *first volume* of his work, entitled, "The present truth: a display of the secession-testimony."—He, no doubt, supposes he has overthrown the opinion I had endeavoured to establish in the *preface* he attacks. Most of his people will give him credit for this, though it is not very

likely many of them will ever be satisfied on this head, by reading his confutation in so large a book; which contains also so very little new matter. That every reader may see how the doctrine is both attacked and defended, he is here furnished with a copy of Mr Gib's *Defence of solemn covenanting*, so far as it relates to my *Preface*.

PART II

*PREFACE; wherein the nature and seasons of public covenanting are explained upon Scripture-principles, in order to satisfy the scrupulous about the expediency of renewing our solemn covenants at present.*

THE Burghers are often asked, "Why they do not renew the covenants, if they maintain nothing but covenanted principles?"—The answer to this question may be laid down in various lights. (1.) Persons may maintain nothing but covenanted principles, and yet never join in an express oath of adherence to these principles. Many of the Antiburghers have been communicants for thirty years past, without ever swearing the oath of the bond, which has now existed about twenty-eight years. (2.) Covenanting is but an occasional duty, and ought to be regulated by a proper regard to times, places, and circumstances. When the church is brought into a situation which contains a providential call to some important duties connected only with her present condition; or, when she is in providence brought into a situation, whereby her members are in great danger of falling from their own steadfastness; or, when a general reformation is to be accomplished: in any of these circumstances, a public covenant or vow may be made unto the Lord, concerning the performance of these duties, the avoiding of these dangers, or the reformation from these sins and errors. These are the *only cases*, wherein the church is authorised, by scripture-example or command, to make a covenant concerning sin or duty, truth or error. Such were the occasions of the covenants in Horeb, Exod. xx. Lev. xxv. and xxvi. chapters; and in the land of Moab, Deut. xxix.; and before the death of Joshua, Josh. xxiv.; and in the reigns of Asa, 2 Chron. xv.; of Joash, 2 Chron. xxiii.; of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxix.; of Josiah, 2 Chron. xxxiv.; and of Zedekiah, Jer. xxxiv.; and in the days of Ezra, chapters ix. and x.; and of Nehemiah,

Nehemiah, chapters ix. and x. The examples in the New Testament, are precisely of the same kind. To make a covenant with the Lord, in any other circumstances, and for any other purposes, than to bind unto duties presently incumbent on the covenanters, in virtue of their present and peculiar situation in providence; or, to fortify themselves against present and peculiar dangers; or, to promote a present reformation among themselves;—is equally contrary to scripture and common sense. (3.) Covenanting should always be managed with a view to *the time to come*. Mercies that have been received, and transgressions of the law of God, in time past, may, and should be considered as motives to this duty; but the duty itself carries the mind only forward to future conduct. In the days of Nehemiah, the Jews entered into a covenant. The mercies God had bestowed on their fathers and themselves, and the sins which themselves and their fathers had committed, induced them to enter into the covenant; but the covenant they made, had only a respect to present reformation and future duties: and therefore they say—"Be-  
 " cause of all this" series of mercies, judgments, and provocations, "we make a sure covenant," namely, to perform future duties, and to reform the present disorders and sins among us; Neh. ix. 38. (4.) Scriptural covenanting was always managed upon principles which fully satisfied all that feared God, about the propriety and reasonableness of what the covenanters did; because they always swore an adherence to revealed truth, and engaged by their oath to reform their *own* ways, and to observe their *own* duty, according to the word of God, and the manifest calls of his providence. This being the matter and purpose of their vows, their covenanting was universally edifying to the saints. (5.) Scriptural covenanting by solemn oath was never reckoned either necessary or seasonable, *except in extraordinary circumstances*: and these extraordinary circumstances were evident to all concerned; being *new occurrences*. Either providence had placed them in a new situation, which every one perceived to be uncommonly dangerous; or, their own sins were uncommonly aggravated. In either of these cases, their circumstances were universally allowed to be extraordinary. (6.) The design of scriptural covenanting was, to acknowledge God as the Lord of the faith, obedience, and resigned submission of the covenanters; and to promote, in their own souls, a deep impression of his truths, a detestation of *their own* sinful courses, and an humble walking with God in the midst of the dangers they were beset with. (7.) The plan of scriptural covenanting in the church, both under the Jewish and Christian dis-



pensation, should always lead directly to the word of God its  
*self*. The Lord God made a covenant with Israel in Horeb;  
 and besides this covenant, he commanded Moses to make a co-  
 venant with them in the land of Moab, Deut. xxix. 1. Joshua  
 made a covenant with Israel before his death, chap. xxiv. 25.  
 Judah, and Benjamin, and others, in the days of Asa, en-  
 tered into a covenant, 2 Chron. xv. 12. Jehoiada made a  
 covenant, 2 Chron. xxiii. 16. It was in Hezekiah's heart to  
 make a covenant, 2 Chron. xxix. 10. Josiah made a cove-  
 nant, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31. Zedekiah made a covenant, Jer.  
 xxxiv. 8. and all the people entered into the covenant, vers.  
 19. Ezra and the Jews made a covenant, Ezra x. 3. and in  
 the time of Nehemiah, the princes, Levites, and priests, made a sure  
 covenant, Neh. ix. 38.—I have particularly cited the very expres-  
 sions used about scripture-covenanting, that it may appear in  
 what light the Holy Ghost has represented every such transac-  
 tion. It is always described as a *transaction entirely new*. It is  
 never once called the *renewing of a former covenant*; but is  
 constantly said to be a *making, or entering into a covenant*, with-  
 out any recognition on any former covenant. No: cove-  
 nanting upon the scripture-plan, recognised, homologated,  
 or approved only the *book of God's covenant*; but not the co-  
 venants made, or entered into by men. Whenever the Jews  
 covenanted, it is plain, they only avouched the Lord to be their  
 God, precisely according to the tenor of his own word, as it re-  
 ferred to their present circumstances and character. I chal-  
 lenge any person to produce so much as one instance from  
 the Bible, of either Jews or Christians *renewing a former*  
*covenant by any future oath*.—If it be said, "That all the  
 future covenants of Israel were but a renovation of the cove-  
 nant, which the Lord made with them in Horeb;" I answer,  
*first*, There is surely some difference between the Lord's *making*  
*a covenant with men*, and men's *entering into a covenant with*  
*the Lord*. When God makes a covenant with men, as he did  
 with Israel in Horeb, he avouches them to be his people, and  
 gives them his laws, statutes, and ordinances, expressly re-  
 quiring them to believe what he has revealed, and to do  
 what he has commanded; but when men make a covenant  
 with God, they avouch him to be their God, engaging to  
 such faith, obedience, caution, and reformation, as their  
 present character and situation require. Can any body be  
 so blind as not to perceive some difference in these things?  
*Secondly*, They had no other eye to the covenant at Horeb,  
 in their future covenants, than merely as it contained a *revela-*  
*tion of the will and authority of God*. There is not the  
 smallest hint, of any respect they had to their fathers avouch-  
 ing



ing of the Lord on that solemn occasion. It is expressly, and always said, *They made, or they entered into a covenant*; but there is not the remotest hint, that they renewed, or repeated *their adherence to the deed of their fathers* \*. From all this it follows, (8.) That it is most unfair and unjust to charge the Burghers with denying any of our covenanted principles, because they do not renew the covenants of our forefathers. Neither reason nor the scriptures will warrant such an inference from such premisses. Did the Jews, in the days of Nehemiah, hold any other than the covenanted principles Israel had maintained towards the time of Joshua's death; because, when they made a sure covenant, they took no notice of Joshua's covenant? They may be allowed to have made a covenant on the same plan, and to the same purpose, with that of Joshua; but they did not pretend to renew his covenant. Indeed, the plan must have been the same in all their covenants, because they covenanted to keep the law of Moses, and to do the will of God. But if men make the appearances their fathers made for religion the ground-work of their own covenanting, there can neither be uniformity, nor much religion in their most zealous contendings about it †. (9.) The Antiburghers have no reason to insult the Burghers

\* Agreeable to this was the practice of the church of Scotland in former periods. The history of her covenanting is clearly explained in the *Answer to Mr. Nairn*, p. 31—38. where we are told, that, "in the year 1580 and 1594, the Confession of Faith, or national covenant, was first sworn and subscribed by persons of all ranks. This covenant was renewed in the year 1597 and though then nine years only had elapsed after the first swearing of that covenant, yet a general bond was added thereto, containing a DISTINCT OATH.—Afterwards, in the year 1638, when our reformers renewed the national covenant, they saw meet to lay aside the general bond added thereto, and which had been nationally sworn and subscribed in the year 1590, and they framed and added a NEW BOND OR OATH.—It is further to be observed here, that the national covenant, as it had been sworn in the years 1580 and 1590, was NO PART OF THE OATH WHICH WAS SWORN in the year 1638.—Our reformers considered and spoke of this new bond, as a COVENANT DISTINCT FROM THE FORMER COVENANT.—The BOND WHICH WAS FRAMED in the year 1638, was, in its form and words, a NEW AND DISTINCT CONFESSION OR FAITH AND COVENANT, and a SEPARATE OATH, whereas the former confession and covenant was NOT A PART, but A PART OF THE TREASURY TREASURY."

† What Mr. Nairn insults for, is altogether unprecedented in the church, (saith the Associate presbytery).

For manifesting this, it may be proper, in the first place, to take a view of the practice of the church of Israel in making and renewing covenants. We have several instances of covenants of duties betwixt God and that people, viz. at Horeb, Exod. xx.; in the land of Moab, Deut. xxi.; in the days of Asa, 2 Chron. xv.; in the days of Jehoiada, xlii.; in the days of Hezekiah, xlii.; in the days of Josiah, xxiv.; in the days of Ezra, Ezra 2;

Burghers so unmercifully as they do, for neglecting to enter into a covenant, or to make one: for, first, the *reduplication*, in their form of covenanting, upon a long history of sins, is at best ensnaring, and is altogether unprecedented in scripture.

and in the days of Nehemiah, Neh. ix. and x. Now, we find not any one instance that Israel, in renewing covenant, did, at any time, repeat the form and words of a former covenant; yea, it is plain they never did: though we have instances of their acknowledging and mourning over the breach of former covenants. Yet will Mr Nairn venture to say, That Israel never renewed their covenants? or that, when they entered of new into a covenant, they thereby did bury, sopite, and destroy former covenants? this indeed is the native consequence of Mr Nairn's scheme." Page 31.

Every intelligent reader of the presbytery's answer to Mr Nairn's objection against the seceding bond, viz. *That it was a quite different oath from the old covenants, under the pretence of renewing them*—will find, that the presbytery has proved, both from scripture, and precedents, and common sense, the absurdity of Mr Nairn's idea of RENEWING RELIGIOUS COVENANTS. All religious covenants are the same in substance, and aim at one general purpose. The scope of them all is, to bind the soul unto the truths and duties of religion. But in this sense, every Christian covenanter may be said to renew Joshua's covenant, or to renew the covenant of the Jews in the days of Josiah, with the same propriety as he may be said to renew the national covenant of Scotland, or the solemn league and covenant of Britain and Ireland. All these Jewish and Christian oaths are allowed, by the most zealous friends to covenanting, to be the same in substance, and to aim at the same purposes. The difference in the nature of the Jewish and Christian dispensations cannot be pled as an objection to the sameness of these covenants: because the difference of these dispensations is only circumstantial, and not essential. However, in case any objection of this sort be thought to lie against representing the British covenants, as the same in substance and design with the Jewish covenants, viz. That these covenants refer to different dispensations;—I may safely be allowed to say, that, supposing the British covenants to be every way agreeable to the New Testament, they must be the same in substance and design with the covenants of the apostolic churches. Why then were not the solemn covenants, first of Scotland, and afterwards of Britain and Ireland, originally considered as a renovation of the covenants of the apostolic churches? Nay, why was not the solemn league and covenant, so far as it concerned Scotland, considered as a renovation of the national covenant of Scotland? Were not both covenants as much the same with each other in their substance and purpose, as the seceding bond is the same with either, or both of them? Or, can it be alleged, that the circumstances of the kingdom of Scotland, when the national covenant was framed, and of Britain and Ireland, when the solemn league was entered into, were more different from the circumstances of the apostolic churches, than the present circumstances of Seceders are from the circumstances of the realm of Scotland, when the national covenant was sworn, and of Britain and Ireland, when the solemn league was made?—But if the national covenant and solemn league were never imagined to be a renewing of the covenants of the apostolic churches, why should the Seceders covenanting be reckoned a renewing of the national covenant and solemn league.

Perhaps, some inconsiderate zealot will impeach this reasoning as fallacious. He will probably reply, "that the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, were never under the obligation of any of the covenants of the apostolic churches; whereas the Seceders are confessedly under the obligation of our solemn covenants." I must beg leave to be of a different opinion on this point. The approved practices of the churches of Christ, whose history

ture. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews confessed their own sins, and these of their fathers, with fasting, *before they made their covenant concerning the reformation of their own sins.* This confession was evidently a previous exercise,

history is ingrossed in the volumes of inspiration, are not only a pattern to all Christians, but a rule of duty, and a rule that has the obligation of a law in all similar cases. Upon this principle, I affirm, that the covenants of the apostolic churches laid as strong obligations upon the people in Scotland, England, and Ireland, concerning all the duties engaged to in the national covenant, and solemn league, even previous to their swearing either of said oaths, as these public oaths do, or can lay at present upon Seceders.

But the presbytery has proved, in the pages referred to, with clearness, and force of sound argument,—That every transaction in covenanting, is a complete oath in itself, and distinct from every former or other oath: in short, they have demonstrated that NO RELIGIOUS COVENANT CAN BE A PROPER RENOVATION OF A FORMER COVENANT. They allow that the matter and design of all religious covenants are the same. They shew, that the truths and duties of religion must, in every several covenant, be avouched, and errors and sins must be renounced, in an exact accommodation of them to the present circumstances of the covenanters. And, finally, they make it evident, that the circumstances of the covenanters, which are always undergoing alterations, will necessarily oblige them to make many changes in the form and words of the oath, or at least to make new applications of a former oath unto other persons, things, times, and cases. Now, where these differences take place, there must, in course, be another and a distinct oath; and consequently, the transaction is not a renovation of a former oath, but the making of a new complete covenant.

What has misled the views of many people on this subject, is, the title of the presbytery's act, "for RENEWING the national covenant of Scotland, "and the solemn league and covenant of the three nations." But the following part of that title is generally overlooked, which explains what sort of renovation they meant, namely, "in a way and manner agreeable to our present situation and circumstances in this period." And when the presbytery proceed to explain this sort of renovation, they say, "that oath," which our reforming forefathers entered into in the last century, "did not bind posterity unto the duties therein mentioned, any other way than it might suit the circumstances God should place them in." *Answers to Mr Nairn*, p. 28. They next shew, that every religious covenant must be framed with a strict regard to the present circumstances of the covenanters, and the present special calls of God's word and providence unto them, at the time they swear it: and they affirm, that the form of a covenant which did quadrate unto the case of our fathers in the last century, does not quadrate unto ours; *ibid.* p. 29. They avow the necessity of framing a new bond or oath, both because our present condition was unforeseen, and unprovided for, in the covenant of our ancestors; and because in presently swearing their covenant, we would be obliged to have a different meaning from theirs, as to time, persons, and things, or else it could not be our present oath, *ibid.*

The renovation of our covenants, which the Associate presbytery promoted, was not intended to be a swearing over again any of the covenants which were sworn in the last century, or the century before it; but they would have it considered as an entering into a like oath, drawn with a view to suit our present circumstances, as much as their covenants were drawn to suit theirs. The presbytery considered their own covenant, as a new, complete, and distinct transaction, *ibid.* p. 32. 33. Even the national covenant, and the solemn league, which the presbytery kept in their eye as a pattern of their bond, and the obligation whereof they represent as a motive that induced them



exercise, Ezra x. 1. "Now when Ezra had prayed, and  
 "when he had confessed, weeping, and casting himself  
 "down before the house of God, there assembled unto him  
 "out of Israel, a very great congregation of men, and was  
 "men, and children; for the people wept very sore. And  
 "Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam,  
 "answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against  
 "our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of  
 "the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this  
 "thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our  
 "God, to put away all the wives, and such as are born of  
 "them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those  
 "that tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it  
 "be done according to the law. Arise, for this matter  
 "belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee: be of  
 "good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made  
 "the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel to swear, that  
 "they should do according to this word: and they swore."  
 From these verses it is plain, that their confession was a dis-  
 tinct exercise from their covenanting:—that their covenant  
 did not reduplicate upon their confession, so as to embody  
 that confession into their oath, and make it a part of their  
 covenant: and—that the matter of their covenant was only  
*a reformation from their own sins, and the future practice of*

them to do so and swear in, were not a part of their new oath, but were pre-  
 scribed in a separate, as older and distinct covenant, *ibid* p. 39.

I only beg leave to add upon the whole, that the national covenant was  
 never renewed (sworn since the year 1581, and 1590, at the associate pres-  
 bytery have clearly proved, *ibid* p. 31.—34. but whenever it was renewed  
 (as the common phrase is), a new oath was always made, and ought always to  
 have been made, for the purpose: and the national covenant was never in-  
 tended to be sworn again upon the footing of its original form, or in its original  
 sense, or even in its first meaning, with respect to persons, time, or things,  
 which the presbytery have also made evident, *ibid* p. 38. From all which  
 it follows, (1.) That the Burghers are unjustly complained of, for not renew-  
 ing the national covenant. (2.) That their business must be, when they  
 had covenanting a reasonable duty, to make, or enter into a new, or distinct oath,  
 and not to renew a former covenant. (3.) That their opinion about the  
 religious clause of some burgher-oaths, can never be an obstruction to their  
 covenanting upon that plan. And, (4.) That it is a great mistake to suppose,  
 that the swearing of the seceding bond, which is so very little adapted to the  
 present circumstances of the Seceders in 1774, is a swearing of the covenants of  
 our forefathers in the last century; and it is a greater mistake still to imagine,  
 that the swearing of said bond is swearing an adherence to the covenants of our  
 ancestors; for, allowing the seceding bond to be of a like nature with the cove-  
 nants of our progenitors, the said bond was always intended to be a complete oath  
 in itself, and a new manifestation, distinct from both the national covenant and  
 the solemn league, *ibid* p. 35.

The reader is referred for further information concerning this matter to my  
 book on *Covenant-keeping*, published in the year 1774. Chap. xiii. sect. 6.

their



*their own duty.* These things are very obvious from Ezra ix. x. and Neh. ix. x. The nature of their covenant was a *solemn engagement* to reform their own *present sins*, and to perform *their duty* in time to come; and to do both *according to the law of God.* — *Secondly,* The form of covenanting presently used by the Antiburghers, is *no way* adequate to the purpose of their present covenanting. Their historical deduction of the evils they confess, does not reach lower than the years 1743; and consequently, cannot suit the present time, unless we say, that there are no new occurrences in the space of twenty-eight years, which ought to be solemnly testified against. The Antiburghers certainly cannot adopt this excuse; having, within that period, found themselves obliged to proceed with the highest censures of the church against so many of their brethren; having also deposed and excommunicated Mr Thomas Mair, for holding what they call an Arminian tenet; and having done many other remarkable things. Were they brought into no new dangers? And were they, upon their own principles, called to no new duties, by these new occurrences among their connections? Why then do they forbear to enlarge their acknowledgment of sins, that it may suit their present circumstances? The only excuse they can make for this neglect is, "That the acknowledgment of sins, and the bond, *as they now stand*, are materially a sufficient testimony against the whole of these sins." But this excuse is no less extravagant than the neglect for which it is urged as an apology: for, upon this principle, the present acknowledgment of sins, and the present bond, which are manifestly adapted to the Secession in Scotland, in its infant-state, will suit every period of the Secession in Scotland; and what is still more remarkable, they will suit every place of the earth, where Seceders may happen to be, without any addition, diminution, or alteration? Upon this principle too, our forefathers must be condemned for having drawn one acknowledgment of sins in 1638\*, and another in 1648, at their covenanting in Scotland. Was not the first materially a sufficient testimony against all the sins they confessed in the second? Yet these noble champions for the cause of Christ, thought a new acknowledgment of their present sins necessary to answer the purposes of a solemn covenant in 1648: and it is manifest, that no acknowledgment of sins is adequate to the present

\* This acknowledgment is sufficiently implied in the bond itself, which expresses, in the most precise terms, the *occasion*, and the *purposes* of their covenant. It has not the form of a separate confession, and yet every reader may perceive it is to the same effect as if it had.

purpose of covenanting, where there is not a confession made of such sins as are in present being and strength. —Some reasons may be very easily guessed at, which will probably account for the Antiburghers neglecting to enlarge their acknowledgment of sins, prefixed to the bond for renewing our covenants. I shall at present only mention one, *viz.* That an approbation of all the censures they passed against the Burghers, is rather too strong an article for either ministers or people to assert, in an express oath to the *Most High*; and yet the omission of this article would have an odd look. I shall only add, (10.) That the Burghers cannot at present covenant with unanimity among their connections, nor to the general edification of such as fear God: and therefore they acquiesce in the approbation of that system which our forefathers engaged by oath to believe and observe. That system they believe to be the system of faith, concerning doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, (to be observed by divine appointment in the Christian church), which was once delivered to the saints. They believe it to be divine in its original, and in its authority upon the conscience. They are persuaded, that no human oath can add any obligation to that which arises from the law of God: and yet they believe, that if we either omit the duties explicitly engaged to by our forefathers, whose transactions are known to us; or commit the sins they engaged to put away; in either of these cases, even *our sin*, in these matters, must have an higher aggravation of guilt and criminality. The nature of *such* sins of omission and commission, lies *wholly* in their being transgressions of the law of God; but the aggravations of *such* sins arise from their being done against these measures of light and conviction concerning known and *acknowledged* sin and duty, which render the transgressor of the law of God a self-condemned criminal. In this sense the Burghers steadfastly maintain the obligation of our solemn covenants; and if the Antiburghers understand it in any other sense, it is proper they should let the world know what they mean by it. But if this is all they mean, they certainly ought in justice to retract the many false aspersions they have thrown upon the Burghers, as if they were perjured, covenant-breakers, enemies to a covenanted work of reformation, apostates from the cause of God and truth, with many other illiberal and groundless imputations; all which are things we allow not.

Thus I have endeavoured to resolve that hard question, *viz.* "Why do the Burghers not renew the covenants, if they maintain nothing but covenanted principles?" I have

have affirmed, that they do maintain all scriptural covenanted principles, to the best of their knowledge; but they derive the obligation of these principles from the authority of God's word; that they own, in the highest and noblest sense, the binding force of these covenants of our forefathers; that covenanting is an occasional work; that a covenant must be always *made* for the present sins, duties, and dangers of the covenanters; that the Antiburghers covenanting is not managed upon the scripture-plan; that, supposing the Seceding acknowledgment of sins perfectly true and evident, it ought never to be reduplicated upon in their bond, so as to become any part of their oath; and that a public covenant should never be entered into, except there be something new and extraordinary in the case of the persons who covenant, and except these circumstances, which are new and extraordinary, be also generally perceived, and generally acknowledged to be a sufficient call to make a covenant concerning them.

I fear the genuine form and purposes of religious covenanting are not commonly understood: for there is some reason to believe, that many who are zealous for that work at present, would be more cool, if they considered it in any other light, than as setting a wall of partition between them who make a covenant, and them that do not; and placing the covenanters on *higher ground*, and in a more sacred inclosure, than other professors attain to. This is the more probable, because their acknowledgment of sins, with reference to which they swear, is intolerably severe upon many who finished their course with faithfulness to God, and in the joys of the Holy Ghost: but in said acknowledgment, they but gently touch their own offences with their little finger. In short, it is undeniable, that they look upon covenanting rather as a *bearing witness against others*, than as *an engaging to reform themselves, and to perform their own duty*.

It will not invalidate my opinion about *renewing religious covenants*, that the covenants made by Israel and Judah were all the same in substance; nor will it follow, from this principle, that every following covenant was a renovation of all the former covenants they had entered into. I have observed above, that all their covenants were the same in substance; and have shewn upon what principle they must have been the same in substance. But there was no repetition of any former covenant when they made a new one; nor did they ever, directly or indirectly, intimate, that they referred to any former covenant their fathers had made, when they covenanted for themselves on any occasion whatever. The case may be illustrated by a familiar example.—When Chri-



fiaps live by faith, or walk in love, they are often repeating the same exercises of mind, and performing over again the same duties; yet no man who understands the gospel-scheme, would call their repeated exercising of faith, *a renovation of their former exercise of it*; or their repeated acts of love, *a renewing of their former acts of it*. In the continued living by faith, and walking in love, a Christian should fix his whole attention, not on what he has attained to, but on the faithful word and sovereign authority of JEHOVAH. The very same was the case of the Jews, who entered into covenant with God; and the same should be the case with Christians too in their covenanting, according to that express directory, Rev. iii. 3. "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." \*

If it be said, "that I am an enemy to covenanting," I appeal against the objectors to the equity, candour, and justice of every reader.—If it be objected, "that I have not  
"fairly

\* A friend in the country having communicated to me the following questions, as proper for the consideration of the Antiburgher ministers and people, I shall submit them to the reader.

(1.) Doth not the law of God expressly require, that every covenant should be entered into with judgment, and with knowledge and understanding of the certainty and goodness of every thing sworn to; and of the existence and real evil of every thing sworn against? Jer. iv. 2. "Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness." Neh. x. 28. 29. "The rest of the people, &c.—every one having knowledge, and having understanding,—entered into an oath." Eccl. v. 4. 6. "When thou vowest a vow unto God,—suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel, it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice?"

(2.) Are not our Antiburgher friends conscious, that perhaps nineteen parts of twenty among their covenanters, have no proper knowledge of many articles in their bond? Have not many been admitted to swear it, whom they could scarce admit, on account of ignorance, to the Lord's table? Nay, have they not admitted some to swear it, who had never previously read it?

(3.) Are they not conscious, that many have been admitted to swear it, without a proper trial of their knowledge of its contents?

(4.) Can they risk a fair trial before disinterested judges, upon a twentieth part of their covenants, that they have a competent knowledge of all the errors they swore against; or of all the facts narrated in the acknowledgment of sins, which the bond reduplicates upon?

(5.) Are they not conscious, that the bulk of common people can have no other certainty or knowledge about many things in their confession of sins and bond, but what depends upon the authority of their pastors?

(6.) Have the Antiburgher, or other ministers, who separate from Christ to exercise a dominion over men's faith and consciences? 2 Cor. i. 24. "Not that we have dominion over your faith." 2 Cor. x. 2. "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men." 1 Pet. ii. 1. "Whether as being lords over God's heritage."—Is it less antichristian, to give a religious sanction by oath, or otherwise, to some facts and doctrines, or to engage against others, MERELY upon the authority of seceding ministers, than for the Roman Catholics implicitly to believe as their church believes?—Does not such conduct practically remove the faith and obedience of the saints in-  
to the hands of men? Does it not debase from the honour



"fairly entered into the argument with the Antiburghers," I deny the charge; but as the field is open, they may do justice to themselves.

London, March 14. 1771.

### P A R T III.

*A DEFENCE of solemn covenanting, in opposition to the Preface of a late Survey.*—Taken from a Book entitled, "*The Present Truth: A Display of the 'Secession-testimony.'*" By Mr ADAM GIB, VOL. 1. P. 355.—380.

[N. B. As all the references in the body of the following DEFENCE to the pages of the PREFACE Mr Gib perused are retained, the marginal references on it direct to the pages of this new edition of the PREFACE. The same order is observed in the DISPLAY with regard to the DEFENCE.]

**A** Pamphlet was published about three years ago,—entitled, ["*An impartial Survey of the controversy so*  
"long

of Christ, as the alone supreme head of his church, who ought to be heard in all things? and how can a work, conducted upon such loose principles, either glorify God, or promote the interests of real religion?

(7.) Has their covenanting been adorned with any remarkable increase of the genuine fruits of the Spirit, mentioned Gal. v. 21.—26. Jam. iii. 17. 18. 2 Pet. i. 5. 6. 7. 1 Cor. xiii. 2.—7.? What do they more than others, in point of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance? Are they less desirous of VAIN-GLORY, and more careful than others, neither to provoke nor to envy the saints? Is their wisdom first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, FULL of MERCY and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy? Does their love to the brethren remarkably abound, with the glorious fruits of Christian charity, which suffereth long, and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave herself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; and which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things? Nay, can it be denied, that many of them even boast of their covenanting; and bitterly reproach the Burghers for neglecting it?

(8.) How does their extravagant boasting of their covenanting, as if it were the *principal part*, if not the *whole* of religion, consist with a truly evangelical manner of performing the duty? How can it be reconciled to the command of Christ, Luke xvii. 10. "When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants?"

(9.) When covenanting is so implicitly gone about, when it produces so little good fruit, and when it is followed with so much boasting,—is not the world tempted to suspect, it is promoted rather as a bond to confirm and keep together a party, than as a means of close walking with Christ?

(10.) In the present broken state of the church, when the fears of God are so remarkably divided in judgment,—have we, in these circumstances, any scripture-warrant for covenanting; or, at least, for imposing this work on the people of God? Can the ends of edification be promoted, in such circumstances, by that work?—If every party of Christians should vow, ac-

"long agitated in the Secession, relative to the religious  
"clause of some Burgeſs-oaths": with a *Preface*,—wherein  
(according to the title-page) "the nature and seasons of  
"public covenanting are explained upon ſcripture-principles;  
"in order to ſatisfy the ſcrupulous, about the expediency  
"of renewing our ſolemn covenants at preſent."

One would imagine, from theſe words, that the *Preface*  
had been deſigned for ſolving and removing ſcruples; thus  
to ſatisfy perſons about the preſent expediency of the renova-  
tion mentioned, in order to their ſetting about it without  
delay. But, under this falſe face, the real deſign and en-  
deavour is,—not only to promote and confirm ſcruples, for  
exploding every ſuppoſition of ſuch expediency; but alſo  
to deſame and aboliſh that ſolemn work altogether; tending  
to corrupt the mind, and ſtupify the conſcience of his ſcrup-  
ulous reader, about the whole affair.

This attack is alſo diſtinguiſhed from all others that have  
yet been made, upon the Associate Preſbytery's method and  
appointment of covenanting work, by another and more  
notable mark of *treacherous diſingenuity*; like the part  
which *Joab* acted [2 Sam. iii. 27.], under a mask of friend-  
ſhip. For it is not made by one who had never acknow-  
ledged, or had fairly renounced the ſtate of the Secession-  
teſtimony; but by one who ſtill pretends, as if he and his  
party (in the ſynod of the ſeparating brethren) were the only  
true ſucceſſors of the Associate Preſbytery in their conſtitu-  
tion and teſtimony; that they "have uniformly kept on their  
"firſt ground,"—as to "the riſe and grounds, and original  
"meaſures of the Secession,"—and have "dropt no part of  
"the teſtimony they had eſpouſed."

The Prefacer manages all his malignant oppoſition to co-  
venanting-work, by way of answer to what he (ironically)  
calls *that hard queſtion*; which he ſays, "the Burghers"  
(he and his party) "are often aſked,—Why they do not re-  
"new the covenants, if they maintain nothing but cove-  
"nanted principles?" p. 4. 15. But there is a palpable de-  
ceit, in repreſenting ſuch a queſtion as having been ever put  
to any of them. It ſhould have been honeſtly repreſented,—  
as a queſtion about why they do not proceed in covenanting-  
work, according to the Act of the Associate Preſbytery for  
that purpoſe; if, as they pretend,—they have ſtill kept the

according to the whole extent of their principles; how much would religion be  
expoſed, and God diſhonoured, by contradictory ſwearing &c.—If all parties  
ſhould conſent to join in one oath, how vague and general muſt it be drawn?  
—is either the one or other a ſuitable meaſure to glorify God, or edify the  
church, or adorn the goſpel?

first ground of the Secession cause and testimony, as it was among the hands of that presbytery. However, his way of stating the question saved him a deal of trouble in answering it.

It would be business too low for this place,—to chastise the arrogance, impertinencies, and improprieties in the Prefacer's manner of writing; with the malicious constructions and suppositions, as also the virulent calumnies about loose procedure in covenanting-work,—which are cast upon the Associate Synod, in that preface: but he, and his correspondent, whose invective he adopts,—are left to the free enjoyment of whatever satisfaction they can find in such measures of scurrility and slander. It may be sufficient here to expose his erroneous doctrine,—about *solemn covenanting*, about *renewing* solemn covenants, and about the Associate Presbytery's *manner* of renewing our covenants: a doing of which in a soft or apologetical manner is what he has forfeited all title unto,—by the abominable spirit of his *Preface* and *Survey*.

## SECTION I. Of Solemn Covenanting.

I. **W**HEN the Prefacer has told, what none ever disputed, that “covenanting is but an occasional duty,”—he allows that in three cases, “a public covenant or vow *may be made*” (putting these words into a distinguished character as here) “unto the Lord;” and tells, that “these are the only cases wherein the church is *authorised*, by scripture-example or command, to make a covenant.” p. 5. Thus, though he gives some room to the words *duty* and *command*, he gives none to their sense,—with regard to covenanting; but really turns it off the footing of *duty* or *obligation* in any case, to rest only upon the footing of mere warrant,—as what *may be*, or is *authorised*: a short method indeed, for settling the consciences of his scrupulous persons quite at ease,—in the neglect of that solemn work.

II. The *three cases*, which he dictates to be the *only cases* wherein this work may take place, are these, viz. “When the church is brought into a situation which contains a providential call to some important duties, *connected only with her present condition*; or when she is in providence brought into a situation, whereby her members are in great danger of falling from their steadfastness; or when a general reformation is to be accomplished,”—that is, as he explains it, “a present reformation among the covenanters:” and he pronounces, that “to make a covenant with the Lord in any other circumstances, and for any other purposes, —is equally contrary to scripture and common sense.” p. 5. p.



The first of these cases, according to any proper sense of the words, is indeed very singular,—even not supposable, as whatever did or can exist; that the church should have “a providential call to some important duties *connected only* “*with her present condition* :” or, as he further expresses it,—“duties presently incumbent on the covenanters, *in virtue* “of their present and peculiar situation in providence.”—An enforcing of the call to certain duties, and an affording of some new or peculiar occasion for the performance of certain duties; these are things that may well enough be ascribed to providential circumstances. But that any duty can be founded upon such circumstances,—as being incumbent *in virtue* of them, and *connected only* with them; or as duties which had no foundation before these circumstances, nor will have any after them: all this is certainly a very gross imagination; which yet may serve to explode covenanting-work, so far as depends on that first case—while people can never apprehend any such duties as it proceeds upon.

And it is observable, as to all the three cases, when determined to be the *only cases*; that the door is thereby absolutely shut against public covenanting,—so far as it may be for the purpose of solemn homage and allegiance by the covenanters to Zion’s King, in opposition to the course of a rebellious people among whom they live: though it was certainly one purpose of all covenanting-work in the Jewish church, to have the name and cause of Israel’s God held fast; not only unto a bearing down of corruptions among themselves, but also as a proper witnessing against the idolatry of the nations around them; according to their character and duty, as a people redeemed from the nations and their gods,—of whom the Lord said, *Ye are my witnesses that I am God*.

Thus the Prefacer endeavours, by his above doctrine of cases, of *only cases*,—to abolish all notion among people, of doing about that solemn work in the character of witnesses for Christ; or of their ever being either called or warranted to make an appearance on the Lord’s side, and to be valiant for the truth upon the earth,—in the way of solemn covenanting. And while his foresaid specification of cases is brought in as one reason, why his party do not renew the covenants; if it be any way to the purpose, it must imply,—that none of these three cases do presently exist among them.

III. He tells, that “scriptural covenanting was always “managed upon principles which fully satisfied all that “feared God,—universally edifying to the saints:” and that it “was never reckoned either necessary or seasonable, “except in extraordinary circumstances; and these extraor-  
“dinary



"dinary circumstances were evident to all concerned,—universally allowed to be extraordinary,—generally acknowledged to be a sufficient call, to make a covenant concerning them." p. 6. 7. 16.

p. 9. 17

The Prefacer is here obliged to allow of some *extraordinary course* to be taken, in *extraordinary circumstances*; notwithstanding his stupid ridicule afterwards, in another case, of any such thing. —But covenanting-work is here put upon such a footing, as must supersede or exclude it altogether; so long as any controversy about it may take place, among any whom an arbitrary charity may please to consider as fearers of God, or saints. Accordingly, the Prefacer gives it for one reason why his party do not renew the covenants,—"that the Burghers cannot at present covenant with unanimity among their connections, nor to the general edification of such as fear God." p. 14. And thus, covenanting-work must have no place in *an earnest contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*; it must have no place,—if any who may be reckoned saints, however far backsliding saints, shall please to object. Fine doctrine indeed, for gulling the consciences of professors! Proper doctrine, for obtaining the answer which he wants to his question; "Have we, in" (present) "circumstances, any scripture-warrant for covenanting?" p. 19. And thus also, p. 19. all the cases in which he had allowed that covenanting *may be*—must go for nothing; because it is not supposable that any of them can ever be altogether uncontroverted, among all supposed fearers of God, or saints.

IV. The Prefacer determines, that "covenanting should always be managed with a view to *the time to come*: mercies that have been received, and transgressions of the law of God in time past, may and should be considered as motives to this duty; but the duty itself carries the mind only forward to future conduct." p. 5. 6. And this pedantic observation might be taken, at first view,—as supposing all his readers to be arrant fools: for who but such could ever imagine, that any might pretend a present covenanting or engaging to do something in the time past; while not a moment of that time can ever be recalled, for a new doing of any thing in it? Do people need to be taught,—that they should not engage to-day, that they will do something yesterday?

p. 9.

But there is a snake in the grass here; which creeps out a little afterwards, upon the head of *renewing covenants*. —The base intendment of the observation is this, that whatever influence of former things the mind may be under, considered

considered as motives: yet the deed of covenanting itself must have no respect to any former attainments or engagements, as recognising the same; nor to any former evils whatsoever, — by way of testifying and engaging against them.

V. The Prefacer informs us, — that “the design of scriptural covenanting was, to acknowledge God as the Lord of the faith, obedience, and resigned submission of the covenanters; and to promote in their own souls a deep impression of his truths, a detestation of their own sinful courses, and an humble walking with God in the midst of the dangers they were beset with: — the matter of their covenant was only a reformation from *their own sins*, and the future practice of their own duty; — the nature of their covenant was a solemn engagement to *reform their own present sins*, and to perform their duty in time to come; — they made their covenant concerning *the reformation of their own sins*.” And all this he sets in opposition to “a bearing witness against others,” which he condemns. p. 7.

9. 14.

10. 11. 16. In the above words, the Prefacer once and again blunders upon a very hard task for his covenanters, even beyond the reach of Omnipotence; which, though it can *make an end of sins*, cannot *reform* them. — But what is the genuine amount of all this misty doctrine, as to the case in hand? It is even this; — That any number of people, in their solemn and public covenanting, must have no regard but to their own intrinsic concerns; they are to keep as much within themselves, as any independent congregation in their ordinary and private church covenant: when their covenanting is in a state of Secession from the corrupt body of a Presbyterian national church; it must be without any regard to the corruptions of that body, it must bear no testimony against the same: and the acknowledgment of God, as a Lord with respect to the covenanters and their interests, — must abstract from any regarding of him as a Lord with respect to any other beings or interests in the world! — There is need to pray for the Lord’s pitying a people, who can submit to such a direction of their consciences.

What has been said may serve, with regard to the Prefacer’s general doctrines about solemn covenanting. The gross insult committed upon the scriptures of the Old Testament, by his pretending to find any foundation in them for such doctrines, deserves no particular notice.

## SECTION II. Of renewing Solemn Covenants.

UPON this head, the Prefacer assumes a most formidable appearance; while he comes forth brandishing a new piece of armour against the truth, such as was never before heard of in the Christian world. It is wholly of his own invention: and so confident is he in it as armour of proof, sufficient for making a full end of renewing covenants,—that he brings it to the field with a bold defiance, like a *Goliath* in the cause of his party; “I challenge” (says he, p. 8.) “any person to produce so much as one instance p. 18. “from the Bible, of either Jews or Christians *renewing a former covenant by any future oath*.”—Yet, after all, there is no real hazard to the truth from the shaking of this spear.

The new doctrine referred to, is of the following amount, viz. “The plan of scriptural covenanting in the church, “both under the Jewish and Christian dispensation, should “always lead directly to the word of God itself:—it is always described as a *transaction entirely new*: it is never “once called the *renewing of a former covenant*; but is “constantly said to be a *making, or entering into a covenant*, “without any recognition on any former covenant; no; “covenanting upon the Scripture-plan recognised, homologated or approved only *the book of God’s covenant*; but “not *the covenants made, or entered into by men*;—there is “not the remotest hint that they renewed, or repeated their “adherence to the deed of their fathers;—nor did they ever “directly or indirectly intimate, that they referred to any “former covenant their fathers had made; when they “covenanting for themselves on any occasion whatever.” (p. 7. p. 10. 17. 8. 9. 17.) Now,

I. A bold stroke is here given to covenanting work in the repeated instances of it under the Old Testament. The plain meaning is,—that, in every new transaction thereof, no acknowledgment or account was made of any such transaction which had formerly taken place; that there was no homologating or approving of any solemn covenant which Israel had formerly made, no adherence thereto,—yea no reference to any such deed, as having ever taken place before.

II. The whole foundation of such new doctrine, is this; that, in every repeated instance of covenanting among the Israelites, “it is constantly said to be a *making or entering into a covenant*, without any recognition on a former covenant,—never once called the *renewing of a former co-*



"venant:" and, for proof of this, the Prefacer quotes the expressions of *making* and *entering* used on each new occasion of that work; adding, "I have particularly cited the very expressions used about scripture-covenanting, that it may appear in what light the Holy Ghost has represented every such transaction." (p. 7.) But,

1. His quotations are very partial and unfair; fitted for serving his own purpose, not the purpose of truth. He conceals a most material circumstance; that in eight of the nine instances of covenanting which he refers to,—the glorious Object is acknowledged or represented in terms which necessarily import a reference unto and recognising of former covenanting\*. He is still acknowledged or represented as *The God, The Lord God of Israel; the God, the Lord God of their fathers; our God, the Lord our God*. In the other instance [2 Chron. xxiii. 16.], it was a covenant that they should be the Lord's people; which could not mean a becoming so for the first time, but a keeping up of that distinguished character which belonged to Israel. And the LORD's character as *their God*, with their character as *his people*,—always necessarily referred unto and recognised former covenant-transactions between God and them, as the formal ground of these characters; according to the *mutual avouching* which therein took place between God and them, *Deut. xxvi. 17. 18.*

2. He tells us, of the repeated covenanting which then took place,—that "it is never once called the *renewing* of "a former covenant." But what a sandy foundation is this, for supporting his new scheme? The question is not, about how it was called,—but about what it *was*; not about words, but about the matter of the thing,—not about the arbitrary stile of language, but about the necessary import of the deed. The Scripture briefly represents matters of fact, in the case,—without recording all the circumstances of manner or form. If it *was* the renewing of a former covenant, we may well enough call it so; as our translators have not scrupled to do, in the contents of some chapters: while they say [Josh. xxiv.], *Josua reneweth a covenant between them and God*; and [2 Chron. xxxiv.] *Josiah reneweth the covenant with God*. But,

3. What are we to understand, by the *renewing* of a covenant? Nothing more can be the real import of the thing, than this, that, without moving any objection against the

\* Deut. xxix. 15. Josh. xxiv. 23. 24. 2 Chron. xv. 12. xxix. 6. 10. xxxiv. 31. Jer. xxxiv. 13. Ezra i. 3. 11. Neh. x. 29.

ancient form of a covenant in its season, and while acknowledging breaches of God's law as likewise breaches of that covenant,—there be a solemn avouching, not only of the primary obligation which the law of God lays upon us, but of a secondary obligation laid on us also by that former covenant. Whatever variations there may be in the manner of doing this,—whatever differences as to its being done more expressly or implicitly; nothing further can belong to the nature of the deed \*. Well,

4. When the people of Israel set about covenanting work, on any new occasion,—was there no *renewing* of any former covenant which Israel had made; according to the proper sense of the thing, above expressed? Was there no reference to any such former covenant; in considering themselves as chargeable with breaches of it, and considering it as a super-added obligation to duties?—If such had been the nature of their covenanting, as the Prefacer teaches, it must have been of an impious nature; as bearing no conformity to the tenor of the Lord's reproofs, nor of their own solemn confessions,—relative to such work.

Every covenant which they made, God acknowledged to be *his* covenant; as he said [Jer. xxxiv. 18.], *my covenant*, (that is) *the covenant which they had made before me*. And what was the tenor of his reproofs, relative to such work? It was this, viz. *This people hath transgressed my covenant, which I commanded their fathers;—they rejected his covenant that he made with their fathers;—they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God;—they have broken my covenant;—they, like men, have transgressed the covenant;—they have transgressed my covenant* †.

And what was the tenor of their confessions, relative to such work; when confessing their own sins, and the sins of their fathers? It was this, viz. *They sinned against thy judgments,—and withdrew the shoulder*, (plainly referring to former engagements); *—they kept not the covenant of God,—they turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers;—we have rebelled*, (plainly referring to former allegiance); *Why do we deal treacherously, by profaning the covenant of our fathers* ‡?

Such was the respect which the Lord always had, and

\* See page 168.

† Judg. ii. 20. 2 Kings xvii. 15. Jer. xxii. 9. Ezek. xlv. 7. Hos. vi. 7. viii. 1.

‡ Neh. ix. 29. Psal. lxxviii. 10. 57. Dan. ix. 5. Mal. ii. 10.

which Israel in their good times always had,—to their former covenantings; utterly inconsistent with the new doctrine so boldly palmed upon us by the Prefacer. The Lord taught them, at a dreadful expence, that they should always maintain a special respect to the covenants of their fathers,—though hundreds of years backward; by an example in the case of even a civil covenant with the Gibeonites\*: how much more, in the case of religious covenants?

Yea, they were taught to consider what had been said of old time, in a way of covenanting,—as said by themselves, in the loins of their fathers; *of old time,—thou saidest I will not transgress*†: which required a particular respect and adherence thereto, a particular sense of obligation thereby,—in their new covenantings. And however far they forgot or lost a sense of it, in their times of corruption; are we to suppose that, in their covenanting-times, they were utterly regardless of all this: that there was then no recognition, no homologation, no adherence, no reference,—as to any former covenanting? The base supposition is plainly refuted, by the covenant-characters under which they always considered both the Lord and themselves, on these solemn occasions; as above represented.

5. The Prefacer has the assurance (p. 9.) to give out,—that the church of *Scotland*, in former periods of covenanting, was against renewing or repeating an adherence to the like deed of their fathers: and he offers to prove this, by a mangled quotation from the Associate Presbytery's *Answers* to Mr *Nairn*, (setting forth a deal of it in capital letters, as if it were a glaring proof of his point); thereby palming that vile doctrine on them also. But there have certainly been few instances of such effrontery in any writer; as if the chance of getting some readers imposed upon, might harden against all shame about the manner of doing it. For, as he could not but know,—the Associate Presbytery is there expressly pleading for the renovation of former covenants; expressly pleading,—that the manner of covenanting agreed upon by them, is a real renewing of our solemn covenants; and expressly pleading,—that the covenanting in our last period of reformation, was a real and professed renewing of the national covenant which had been sworn in the period preceding‡. Only, they are there pleading,—that this *renovation* does not require a repetition of the same form and words wherein covenants were formerly conceived.—And so, another passage

\* 2 Sam. xxi. 1. 2.

† Jer. ii. 20.

‡ See this at large, p. 259.—273.



in these *Answers*, which the Prefacer (p. 14.) also quotes for p. 12. serving another purpose (with shameless inconsistency), bears the following conclusion, viz. " We find not any one instance that Israel, in renewing covenant, did, at any time, repeat the form and words of a former covenant: yea, it is plain they never did: though we have instances of their acknowledging and mourning over the breach of former covenants. Yet will Mr *Nairn* venture to say, that Israel never renewed their covenants? or that, when they entered of new into a covenant,—they did thereby bury, sopite and destroy former covenants?"

III. As this adversary to covenant-renovation teaches,—that Christians, in covenanting, should have their attention wholly turned away from any former attainments of this sort; he sticks not at the monstrous absurdity of telling them, (p. 17.) that they have an " express directory" for this (in Rev. p. 18. iii. 3.): *Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.* Strange! May he not now make any thing a proof for any thing! Is not this an express directory for the very reverse, even for turning back their attention to former attainments; in order to a holding them fast, with repentance for their failings in that matter?

Well, but (says he, p. 17.) " The case may be illustrated p. 17. by a familiar example.—When Christians live by faith, or walk in love, they are often repeating the same exercises of mind, and performing over again the same duties: yet no man who understood the gospel-scheme, would call their repeated exercising of faith a *renovation of their former exercise of it*; or their repeated acts of love a *renewing of their former acts of it.*"

But, in general, it may well be reckoned very odd,—to state a comparison betwixt permanent deeds in the church, and transient acts in the mind; as if there could be any sense, in arguing from the one to the other. More particularly, as to the *gospel-scheme* (here pedantically lugged in),—what need is there for any man to understand it, in order to prevent his calling things as above expressed? A moderate knowledge of the common-sense-scheme, may certainly serve the purpose. For, though a *like* exercise or act can be performed of new,—no body will imagine, that *the same* exercise or act can be *renewed*; more than that the same time in which it took place can be recalled. And though some people cannot be beat off the notion of renewing *covenants*; it never entered into their heads to think of renewing a former *exercise* or *act* of covenanting,—while it is of the nature of every exercise or act, that it can be performed but once. Yet will the Prefacer's

gospel-scheme allow him to say, about a new act of faith or love, (as he argues about new covenanting),—that it contains no approbation of, no adherence to any former attainment or engagement in this matter!

If one should try to make sense of his illustration, it is a renewing of former *faith* or *love* about which he must be supposed to argue; that a Christian's present faith or love, cannot be called a renewing of his former faith or love. Very true: but what then becomes of the comparison? For a Christian's present faith and love cannot be called a renewing of the former, because it is just the very same with his former faith and love! Still the same one faith and love, that he has to exercise all his days; as much as still the same soul to exercise them.—And the Prefacer might have treated the understanding of his reader with more decency, than to be-fool it by such a senseless comparison.

IV. His finishing stroke to covenant-renovation, lies in a vile reproach cast upon it (p. 10.); as if, in opposition to a being led “directly to the word of God itself,”—men did thereby “make the appearances their fathers made for religion, the ground-work of their own covenanting.”—But is there no difference between a pattern and a ground-work? Or doth a regard to former vows lie off the road to God's word? Or must a going forth by the footsteps of the flock—be now reckoned inconsistent with a going directly to the word of God itself.

This Prefacer will not refuse,—that he once solemnly vowed an adherence to some subordinate standards of religion, which were framed and avouched in the days of our fathers. But did he then take these standards for the ground-work of his religion? Or did he not take them, for a proper guide,—as leading him directly to the word of God itself, for the ground-work of his religion?

These cases are quite parallel, as to the present argument. And indeed, as may be particularly laid open in an Appendix to the next volume of this work,—his new scheme is not only laid against covenant-renovation; but it even wickedly strikes at the root of all covenanting-work, yea of all engagement to any subordinate standards or tests of orthodoxy, in any period of the Christian church: all under the stale pretence, of going “directly to the word of God itself.”

V. What has been said may serve, for the Prefacer's doctrine about covenant-renovation: and another point, as very nearly connected with it, must now be considered,—his doctrine about *covenant-obligation*: or about the binding nature

of solemn covenants upon posterity.—In general, he explodes all that any mortal ever before meant by such obligation: and indeed, as to this point, he acts with self-consistency. For as the renewing of former covenants just means an avouching the perpetual obligation of them, in a way and manner suited to our circumstances; all notion of renewing covenants, either under the Old or New Testament, is destroyed of course,—by overthrowing that perpetual obligation.

The Prefacer's doctrine, upon this head, lies in the following account that he gives of his party (*p.* 14. 15.) viz. "The p. 16.  
 " Burghers do maintain all scriptural covenanted principles,  
 " to the best of their knowledge; but they derive the obligation of these principles from the authority of God's  
 " word;—they own, in the highest and noblest sense, the  
 " binding force of these covenants of our forefathers:—  
 " they are persuaded, that no human oath can add any obligation to that which arises from the law of God: and  
 " yet they believe, that if we either omit the duties explicitly  
 " engaged to by our forefathers, whose transactions are known  
 " to us; or commit the sins they engaged to put away; in  
 " either of these cases, even *our sin*, in these matters, must  
 " have an higher aggravation of guilt and criminality. The  
 " nature of such sins of omission or commission, lies *wholly*  
 " in their being transgressions of the law of God; but the  
 " aggravations of such sins arise from their being done against these measures of light and conviction concerning  
 " known and acknowledged sin and duty, which render the  
 " transgressor of the law of God a self-condemned criminal.  
 " In this sense, the Burghers stedfastly maintain the obligation of our solemn covenants: and if the Antiburghers  
 " understand it in any other sense," (as they certainly do);  
 " it is proper they should let the world know what they  
 " mean by it."

But the world has not the smallest need to be let know, what these whom he calls Antiburghers mean in the present case: for they are sufficiently known to mean nothing by the obligation of covenants, other than what all the world hitherto has understood to be the sense of the thing,—according to the common use of the words; that a being under the obligation of our solemn covenants, means a being *parties covenanting* in the loins of our fathers.\*—However, this new-sense

\* This is certainly the only sense of covenant-obligation, that ever entered into any mind till now. Accordingly, generations to come were considered, in their covenanting fathers, as parties then covenanting with God and  
 covenanted



new-sense Prefacer might have given a good example; in letting the world know plainly what he means: were it not that promoters of error, as it is their interest, do really practise the art of keeping their meaning under a mask. Yet, in the present case, the mask may be easily taken off.

The foregoing account which he gives of his party, bears a calumnious insinuation,—as if others derived the *obligation of their principles* from some lower authority than that of God's word. And why? Because they plead a *covenant-obligation upon themselves*, to maintain these principles as derived only from the authority of God's word!—There is also some misty doctrine here, about the *nature and aggravation of sin*; which (beside that there is some nonsense in it \*) is no-way to his purpose: further than as it bears another calumnious insinuation, that the friends of renewing covenants are for putting them into the place of the law of God; and as it excludes the breach of our solemn covenants from having any place, even among the aggravations of our sin; by confining these aggravations to a sinning against our "measures of light and conviction," which we may derive from these covenants in common with any other means.

But he gives a further opening of his mind, in representing his party as "persuaded that no human oath can add any obligation to that which arises from the law of God."—Had he said, that no human oath can add any authority to God's law, or make any increase of its obligatory power; every person who stands in awe of blasphemy would have agreed with him. Or had he said, that an oath can be of no real obligation, if contrary in its matter to God's law, —though it can make an obligation, in some cases, where

covenanted with by him; so that they came long after to be punished, not merely as law-breakers, but likewise as covenant-breakers, respecting the covenant made by them and with them in their fathers: according to *Deut. xxix. 14. 15. 24. 25*.—And hence appears the atrocious nature of the Prefacer's doctrine, about the Jews having never renewed covenants; while, if every new covenanting among them did not import a renewing of all former covenants,—it must have imported a perfidious renouncing of all the covenant obligation which they had been formerly brought under, in the loins of their fathers.

\* He tells, that "the nature of sins—lies wholly in their being transgressions of the law of God." But guilt certainly belongs to the nature of sin; and so, this must lie wholly in being a transgression of the law of God. Yet he owns, that an acting contrary to the covenant-engagements of our forefathers—gives our sin "an higher aggravation," (that is, an additional weight) "of guilt." So then, this guilt lies wholly in acting contrary to the law of God; and yet partly in acting contrary to these covenant-engagements!—Primarily in the place of *wholly*, would have saved the sense; but must have destroyed his argument.

that

that law makes none, he would have been liable to no contradiction. Or had he said, that the obligation of oaths is subordinate unto and founded in the law of God,—so that a breach of these is primarily a breach of that law; no fault would have been found with his doctrine.—But here is a quite different matter: such a representation of his party (it is hoped most injurious) as tends to make them odious, among all who pay the smallest regard to the LORD's name in any oaths whatsoever. For why should any oath be ever administered in any case, or why should a swearer make any account of his own oath in any case, or how can others have any dependence on a man's oath in any case,—if no new obligation arises from oaths!—

The law of God binds men; and this is *one* obligation, the primary obligation upon their consciences. But men also bind themselves by oaths; particularly by solemn vows of conformity to that law: and is not this *another* obligation,—an additional obligation, though subordinate? No; says the Prefacer: according to him, no human oath can add any obligation to that which men are previously under by the law of God: so that, beside the “guilt and criminality” which lies in *law-breaking*, there can be no additional “guilt and criminality” in *perjury* or *covenant-breaking*; because there is no additional obligation, to be thereby trampled upon! What horrible doctrine, against all obligation of oaths or covenants!

Yet he has devised a new sense of such obligation; telling that, “in this sense, the Burghers stedfastly maintain the obligation of our solemn covenants.”—Well, what is the sense that he here means? It just amounts to this: that as we may derive measures of light and conviction about sin and duty, from what our forefathers did—their transactions being known to us, while all histories of their times have not perished; so, a sinning against these our measures of light and conviction, is an aggravation of our guilt and criminality.

And is this to maintain, stedfastly to maintain the obligation of our solemn covenants? is this to “own, in the highest and noblest sense, the binding force of these covenants of our forefathers?”—What sort of relation has all this to these covenants; other than to the case of any covenants in the Jewish church, or to the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, or to the case of the angels who kept not their first estate,—or to a thousand other things, from which we may in the same manner derive measures of light and conviction about sin and duty? And is this “the highest and noblest sense”

"sense" of covenant-obligation,—this arrant nonsense, so impudently palmed upon the world.

The real and dreadful issue of the matter, is,—that this Prefacer's doctrine wholly explodes the standing obligation of our solemn covenants upon posterity; it blots out the breaking, burning and burying of these solemn covenants,—from among the grounds of the Lord's controversy with this generation; and upon the matter justifies all those wicked laws, by which their standing obligation was condemned.

### SECTION III. *Of the Associate Presbytery's Manner of renewing our solemn covenants.*

THE Prefacer having offered up all covenant-renovation, yea and all covenant-obligation, with all homage to God in solemn covenanting,—as a great sacrifice to the idol of his own malignancy; no wonder that the Associate Presbytery's manner of covenanting is next devoted by him to the same horrid treatment.

The manner of renewing our solemn covenants, as agreed upon and enacted by them, is in an *engagement* to duties, following upon an *acknowledgment* of sins; which have been fully exhibited in the preceding part of this volume. That acknowledgment commences with the begun fall of reformation-work, in the last century; without going back upon any mistakes or mismanagements, in the preceding work of reformation: because evils of this sort cannot be properly ranked among the standing grounds of the Lord's controversy with their posterity; or any other evils—but these which belong to the succeeding course of apostasy from that reformation.

The bond, or engagement to duties, which follows upon that acknowledgment, bears a general reference to the evils which are therein particularly expressed; as an engagement to contend and testify against the same: evils which are noway matters of doubtful disputation, among the genuine friends of the Secession-cause; however much any of them be so among others, in this corrupt generation. That bond also particulariz's some of these evils: under the characters of *Deism*, *Arianism*, *Arminianism*,—*Independency*, and *Latitudinarian tenets*: but these cannot justly be reckoned obscure things, in dark or ambiguous terms; because each of them is particularly defined and explained, in the preceding acknowledgment.

The Prefacer's audacious hostility against that solemn  
work,



work, as attacking it on different sides,—is now to be considered. And,

I. He reproaches it (p. 10. 11. 15.) under the character of p. 11.  
 “ the Antiburghers covenanting,—their form of covenant- 15.  
 “ ing,—the form of covenanting presently used by the An-  
 “ tiburgher.” But the present form of covenanting in  
 Scotland as used by these whom he calls by that name,—is  
 precisely the same, without the smallest addition or altera-  
 tion, that was agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery in  
 the year 1743. And therefore the Prefacer, for himself and  
 his party, has hereby foully renounced all succession to the  
 Associate Presbytery,—as to the state which the Secession-  
 testimony was brought unto among their hands: so that  
 he cannot longer pretend, without intolerable absurdity and  
 impudence,—as if they had “ uniformly kept on the first  
 “ grounds and original measures of the Secession;” and had  
 “ dropt no part of the testimony they had espoused.” No;  
 he must leave all this as the distinguishing character of those  
 whom he now reproaches for their form of covenanting.

II. He declaims against this form of covenanting, upon  
 the head of the *reduplication* which the bond has upon the  
 confession \*.—He tells us (p. 10. 11. 16.), that the con- p. 13.  
 fession 15.

\* The Prefacer has seen meet to pass by one topic of most senseless abuse, which has been committed upon this *reduplication*.—It has been pretended, that the bond thereby means a swearing to the historical truth of the facts represented in the confession; a swearing, that the historical narration which it contains is true. But there is not one syllable in the bond, which even seems to bear such a meaning; or to afford the smallest ground for imagining,—that it admits of any comparison with the case of ascertaining the truth of controverted facts, by the deposition of witnesses. Yea, it absolutely excludes any such meaning: because the swearers of the bond have been already making a solemn confession of the evils narrated, as true in point of fact, excluding all controversy about the truth of the facts. And while their swearing necessarily supposes, that they are fully satisfied about the truth of all the facts narrated in the confession,—having already made a solemn acknowledgment of them as such; it cannot be the *truth* of these facts, it can only be *their own engagement* to contend and testify against the evil thereof,—that they must be understood to swear unto, or to ascertain by their oath.

But the abuse of this hated reduplication—has been carried to even a grosser absurdity: as if “ it must imply, that they believe the truth of the ac-  
 “ knowledgment so much, as to be able to swear, that what therein is men-  
 “ tioned as evil is certainly so.”—Certainly, they must believe the truth of the acknowledgment in all its parts; and they must believe, that whatever is therein mentioned as evil is certainly so: but they are not so stupid as to imagine,—that the *morality* of actions, or the *nature* of evils, is to be ascertained by oaths instead of arguments.

By such methods of reasoning, men evidently sacrifice the credit of their understanding to their malignancy. And all turns about to the same point which the Prefacer aims at; to defame and exclude all vowing to the Lord against prevailing evils,—while this cannot possibly be, without having a reference

cession in the days of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* "was evidently a previous exercise—a distinct exercise from their covenanting, their covenant did not reduplicate upon their confession, so as to embody that confession into their oath and make it a part of their covenant:" that "the seceding acknowledgment of sins,—ought never to be reduplicated upon in their bond, so as to become any part of their oath:" and that "the reduplication in their form of covenanting, upon a long history of sins, is at best enslaving; and is altogether unprecedented in Scripture."

And here indeed is fine doctrine about covenanting; which, if it means any thing at all, must mean,—that covenanting should never contain an engagement to contend and testify against any sins whatsoever: for fear of embodying these sins into, and making them a part of the oath!—Moreover, is not the confession as much a previous exercise in the present case, as much a distinct exercise from covenanting,—as ever it was in the days of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, or as ever it can possibly be; when the one exercise is quite finished and over, before the other be entered upon? And can the covenant now be justly said to have one grain more of a reference unto or reduplication upon the confession, as to the matter of the thing,—than it had in *Nehemiah's* time; when the covenant was made [*Neh. ix. 38.*] expressly *because of all this* in the preceding confession?

The Prefacer's language, about *embodying* the confession into the oath,—and making it *a part of the covenant, a part of the oath*, (which yet was altogether as much done in *Nehemiah's* time as now); requires some other sort of understanding than the world can yet afford, to make sense of it: as the swearing a confession of sins, thus transforming either the confession or the sins into an oath, cannot but be rank nonsense.—And must every reference that an oath makes to any thing, be an *embodying* of that thing into the oath as *a part* of it? According to such reasoning, the oath of the covenant in the year 1638 must have been a very monstrous oath. Yea, at this rate, every religious oath among Christians must be said to have all the Bible (even every history thereof) embodied in it,—made a part of it: and the *religious clause* of some burgess-oaths must be said to have all the laws of the land about religion, and even the *Roman religion* called Pa-

made to them in the oath: such a reference or reduplication as belonged (though in a different form) to the bond by which the national covenant was renewed in the year 1638, no less than to the bond by which it is renewed in this period; as any body may see by comparing them.

*pistry,—*

*pistry*,—all embodied into, and made a part of that oath!—But what will this Prefacer stick at; when he reckons it ensnaring, and altogether unprecedented in Scripture,”—to come under solemn vows for contending and testifying against the grounds of the Lord’s controversy with this generation?

III. He declaims against the Associate Synod (*p.* 11. 12.) p. 15. for still resting in that form of covenanting which was agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery; which (says he) “cannot suit the present time:” insisting that they should “enlarge” p. 15. “their acknowledgment of sins;” thus to have “a confession made of such sins as are in present being and strength.” And he uses two notable arguments, for this purpose:—one is (*p.* 12.) the example of “our forefathers; they (says he) p. 15. “having drawn up one acknowledgment of sins in 1638” (which was never before heard of!) “and another in 1648:” the other argument being a quotation (*p.* 13. 14.) from p. 13. the Answers to Mr *Nairn*; which is merely an arguing against our being “obliged and confined unto a repetition of” “the same form or words wherein our covenants were conceived in the last century!” Such arguments are only for being wondered at!

But, whatever the Prefacer thinks,—the Associate Synod reckons all the sins mentioned in their acknowledgment to be still “in present being and strength;” while the perpetration of many, and the guilt of all upon this generation, still is so: and let him reckon the opinion ever so extravagant; they are of opinion,—that the public corruptions which have taken place since the year 1743, are still materially the same corruptions (in an incorrigible progress thereof) which have been specified in that acknowledgment; yea he himself (*Survey*, *p.* 35.) calls them, “the manifest progress of the evils that occasioned the Secession.” Yet the Synod pretends to no perfection, in the management of the Lord’s work among their hands; it is with much struggling, that they have been enabled to hold fast what they have: and only a man of the Prefacer’s cast could use an invective about their not doing more, as an argument against what they do.

He makes a senseless but malicious guess (*p.* 12. 13.) at one reason, for their “neglecting to enlarge their acknowledgment of sins;” as if this would oblige them to take in (what he calls “too strong an article”) an approbation of all “the censures they passed against the Burghers.” But they would never find themselves obliged to this,—till once they found themselves obliged to make that approbation a term of communion among their people; which none of them has

ever



ever yet done: they have never imagined, and it is expected never will,—that a positive approbation of all church-censures should have a place among the terms of communion.—Yet one thing is plain; that their still resting in their original form of covenanting, must be very disagreeable to this Prefacer: because it evidently shuts up him and his party, from a considerable advantage to their cause,—even from any occasion to declaim against the Synod for novelty in the manner of covenanting.

p. 18. IV. The acknowledgment of sins is defamed (p. 13. 18.) as insisting on “many facts which cannot be certainly known;” that the bulk of common people can have no other *certain* *tainty* or *knowledge* about many things in their confession “of sins and bond, but what depends upon the authority of their pastors;”—and that it is not less antichristian,” to proceed in this manner (as to “some facts and doctrines”) *merely* upon the authority of Seceding ministers; than for “the Roman Catholics implicitly to believe as their church believes.” But a baser calumny cannot be devised, than a giving out,—that people are called to take some *doctrines* *merely* upon the authority of Seceding ministers; and as little are people called to take any *facts* upon their authority; unless an expressing of most notorious facts, could be reckoned the same thing with an ascertaining of them!

But what is the ground of certainty or knowledge that people should have about *facts*, or that the nature of the thing can admit of? Is it any other than *testimony*?—A divine testimony, about the truth of any facts since the days of the apostles, we cannot have; as no histories or records thereof are written by divine inspiration. We can therefore have no ground of certainty or knowledge about these, beyond what we ourselves have been eye or ear witnesses of,—no other but human testimony; the nature of the things can admit of no other: and according to the most express divine warrant (*Deut. xvii. 6. 2 Cor. xiii. 1.*), we are to let our consciences rest upon this ground in such matters.

At the same time, as the Lord threatens a *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*; people are called (*Lev. xxvi. 40.*) to *confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers*: and how can this be done now,—unless they proceed upon human testimony, as to *the iniquity of their fathers* \*?

\* A west-country minister of the established church, already referred to in a note, when inveighing to his people against covenanting-work among Seceders in his neighbourhood, affirmed,—that a “believing things on the testimony of such as they think grave and learned men,” is “according to the doctrine of the Jesuits.” And is it an article of Jesuitism, to take facts on human testimony? After this, any thing!

But

But the Prefacer's doctrine about *certainly* and *knowledge*, as to matters of public confession before the Lord,—doth wickedly exclude all giving of glory to God, in lamenting over the iniquity of our fathers; yea over any iniquity whatsoever, except so far as a person (being an eye or ear witness) is "certain from his own proper knowledge,"—as is expressed by one referred to in the note.

After all, it requires a great deal of assurance,—to represent the acknowledgment of sins as containing any detail of uncertain facts; while all of them do lie in the most public and authentic histories and records of the kingdom: and though this acknowledgment has now been lying before the world about thirty years, exposed to the criticism of many desperate enemies; none of them has ever yet been able to instruct one single falsehood in it. Yea, there never was any case since the days of the apostles, nor can be to the end of time,—in which people had or can have better evidence to proceed upon, in confessing the iniquity of their fathers.—And must people be insulted, after all; as if they were proceeding with Popish or implicit faith, in this solemn work?

V. The Prefacer aims a finishing stroke at the Associate Synod (p. 13), about their manner of renewing our solemn covenants; by telling that "they insist on many *antiquated facts* in their confession of sins, which—have comparatively little influence on present conduct."

These words are indeed but few; yet of great and horrid importance: as they contain the most daring outrage upon the work of bearing witness for Christ, yea upon the rights of the divine holiness,—that has ever been committed under the colour of friendship to our covenanted reformation.

The Prefacer excepts none of the facts mentioned in the confession of sins, from the character of *antiquated facts*: yea (whatever special respect he may have to some or an older date), he plainly includes them all under this character; because he inveighs against that confession, as if it did not contain "a confession of such sins as are in present being and strength."

Well; these many facts are, with him, *antiquated facts*: they are out of date, and should be out of head,—like an old Almanack. The oldest of them was not an hundred years back from the time of framing the confession; yet they must all be considered now, as *antiquated facts*: though facts above a thousand years back were confessed at covenanting in *Nebemiah's* time,—under a very different consideration.

Such doctrine cannot be excused from this blasphemous import; that when the Lord brought dreadful evil upon *Jerusalem*.

*Jerusalem*, for the bloody crimes of *Manasseh* above an hundred years before,—he was dealing unjustly, as proceeding upon *antiquated facts* ! And that if the Lord shall come to visit the iniquity of our fathers upon their children in this generation, though not yet the third and fourth generation,—he will be dealing unjustly, as proceeding upon *antiquated facts* !

And now the Prefacer has, by one bold stroke, blotted out all the grounds of the Lord's controversy with this generation, all his indictment against them,—set forth in the acknowledgment of sins ; as a parcel of *antiquated facts*. He thus endeavours to make the generation quite easy about these matters ; particularly, as if they had no reason to be apprehensive of the Lord's making inquisition for the blood of his martyrs in this land : or as if it were but an *antiquated warning*, that lies in *Is. xxvi. 21.*

But however little influence these facts have upon the present conduct of this Prefacer, and such as he ; it is to be hoped that a remnant shall be preserved, quite otherwise exercised about them before the Lord. And it is to be feared that a time will come when he and they, with confusion of face, will find the Lord's then present conduct to be very greatly influenced by them.

## C O N C L U S I O N.

The Prefacer having finished his labours against covenanting-work, he most natively supposes (*p. 21.*) that people would say, what his own conscience could not but say,—that he is “an enemy to covenanting.” And he certainly is so, as really (however differently) as any who ever passed under the character of *Malignants*, in former days of solemn covenanting.

But, says he,—“I appeal against the objectors to the equity, candour and justice of every reader.” And indeed, though none of his readers, so far as in the exercise of reason, can excuse him from this enmity ; many of them may favour him with a sort of justice that will excuse the enmity itself. Yet this will prove a cold comfort to him, when a deep necessity shall be found, some time or other,—for appealing that cause from another sort of justice to the bar of mercy.

Upon the whole, it is to be considered as one of the steps of the Lord's righteous judgment upon a backsliding generation,—that he has permitted this man to rise up with a brow of brass, under a delusive mask of friendship to our cove-



wanted reformation, for seducing the Lord's people from any genuine regard to it, and for promoting the present apostacy from a witnessing profession.

So much for the *Preface*. When the *Survey* comes to be considered, there will appear a further verifying of that awful prediction,—*Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.*

## P A R T IV.

### A DISPLAY of the Spirit, Principles, and Fallacy of the foregoing Defence, &c.

NOTHING can be more disagreeable than to engage in a dispute with a man of Mr Gib's temper. The violence of his passions disgrace his argument; and the pleasure he takes in humbling his adversary, induces him to use the coarsest language. He indeed pretends much to *modesty* and *delicacy*; he owns that, upon *one* occasion at least, an excess of this disposition became a snare both to him and his presbytery in the affair of Leith-congregation\*: but is it to punish himself for that single instance of indiscretion, that he has been so careful ever since to abound in the lowest expressions of a *Billingsgate-wench*, both in the *Answer* he gave to his elders, and in the foregoing *Defence*, &c? Surely a disputant may be hearty and warm in pleading his cause, without dishonouring his own reason, without unmaning himself, or provoking the pity and contempt of mankind. While I am entering on the examination of a performance, written in Mr Gib's own *STYLE* and *MANNER*, I may venture to adopt a saying of his, on another occasion;—"One thing I am sure of, that *his* performance may well serve as "a beacon for warning me to steer aside from that hateful "rock, upon which *he* has so signally and miserably split- "ted†.—With this caveat in my view, and it occurs as often as I look into his *Defence*, &c. I shall be quite inexcusable if I render railing for railing, while I am examining, (1.) The *spirit*, (2.) The *principles*, and, (3.) The *fallacy* of his performance.

\* *Refuge of Lies*, &c. p. 35. 36. 46.

† *Preface to Refuge*, &c. p. 8.

# SECTION I. *A Display of the SPIRIT of Mr Gib's Defence of Solemn Covenanting, &c.*

A Persian soldier, who was heard reviling Alexander the Great, was well admonished by his officer, Sir, *You are paid to fight against Alexander, and not to rail at him* \*. When Mr Gib undertook to defend solemn covenanting, in opposition to the *Preface* of a late Survey, he should have considered there is a wide difference between *fighting against it* with clear argument, and *railing at it* without either reason or manners. Even if the *Prefacer* and the *Preface* should be allowed to deserve all the infamy and contempt flung upon them in the *Defence*, &c. still the public would have good reason to resent the affront put upon them, in the *spirit* that runs through the said *Defence* from beginning to end.—Intelligent readers will not need any commentary to assist them in perceiving it: and I wish they may be able to excuse my labour, in collecting an evidence that is so exceeding clear in every paragraph. However, for the sake of another sort of readers, and from a regard to the merits of Mr Gib the Defender, I must do justice to this branch of the subject, by exhibiting the *decency*, the *prudence*, the *candour*, the *wit*, the *modesty*, the *consistency*, the *criticism*, the *gratitude*, and the *perplexity*—of THAT SPIRIT which animates his *Defence*, &c.

ARTICLE I. The DECENCY of his sentiments and expressions, may be fairly estimated from the following instances: “*The arrogance, impertinencies, and improprieties in the Prefacer’s manner of writing—malicious constructions and suppositions—virulent calumnies—measures of scurrility and slander—abominable spirit of his Preface and Survey—his stupid ridicule—fine doctrine for gulling the consciences of professors—pedantic observation—base intendment—the Prefacer blunders upon a task for his covenanters even beyond the reach of Omnipotence—misty doctrine—gross insult committed upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament—base supposition—few instances of such effrontery—monstrous absurdity—the gospel-scheme pedantically lugged in—wickedly strikes at the root of all covenanting work, yea, of all engagement to any subordinate standards or tests of orthodoxy—he explodes all that any mortal ever before meant by covenant obligation—this new-sense Prefacer—the atrocious nature of the Prefacer’s doctrine—He ranks him among the promoters of error—the account bears a calumnious insinuation—some nonsense*

“ in it—another calumnious insinuation—what horrible doctrine  
 “ against all obligation of oaths or covenants—this arrant non-  
 “ sense so impudently palmed upon the world—this Prefacer’s  
 “ doctrine wholly explodes the standing obligation of our solemn  
 “ covenants upon posterity—it blots out the breaking, burning,  
 “ and burying of these covenants, from among the grounds of  
 “ the Lord’s controversy with this generation—it justifies all  
 “ those wicked laws by which their standing obligation was  
 “ condemned.”

But I will not presume to try the patience of my readers on this article much further. The whole third section is still an unreaped harvest; and if any body has a relish for such entertainment, he will find variety enough in that rank and luxuriant field: only he must expect, that according to his pasture, so will he be filled. The first paragraph may serve as a specimen of the polite and decent language of its author through the whole. It is expressed in these terms;—“ The  
 “ Prefacer having offered up all covenant-renovation, yea,  
 “ and all covenant-obligation, with all homage to God in  
 “ solemn covenanting, as a great sacrifice to the idol of his  
 “ own malignancy; no wonder that the Associate presbyte-  
 “ ry’s manner of covenanting is next devoted by him to the  
 “ same horrid treatment.”

Is this the voice of Christian zeal? Are these the words of soberness? However much the Prefacer may be to blame for misconceiving and misrepresenting his subject; yet there is a decency in writing, which should be observed by every author: to neglect this, is to affront mankind; and no degree of provocation can be supposed to warrant it. How far Mr Gib has attended to this, let the reader judge from the foregoing extracts, which might have been greatly enlarged.—That gentleman has observed in one of his polemical pieces, that “ the  
 “ scripture speaks of blasphemy against men, Rom. iii. 8. Col.  
 “ iii. 8. Tit. iii. 2.; and (says he) I cannot imagine that a  
 “ more daring and shocking instance of such a thing, may  
 “ have ever taken place in the Christian church \*,” than in  
 the performance of his elders. But it would seem the *Preface* and *Survey* are worse still!—The reader may please himself in the application of the following period: “ I may well  
 “ enough suppose, that, all circumstances considered, no  
 “ reader ever before met with a more furious, a more mon-  
 “ strous extravagance of virulent invectives and railing a-  
 “ buse, making an appearance from the press †.”

ARTICLE 2. HIS PRUDENCE in conducting the *Defence* he makes of *solemn covenanting*, is opposition to the *Pre*

\* *Refuge*, &c. p. 134.

† *Preface to the Refuge*, &c. p. 2.



*face*, &c. is remarkable, on more accounts than one: for, (1.) He prudently supposes, without putting himself to much trouble to prove it,—that the mode of covenanting, observed by him and his party, is agreeable to the scriptures: which the Prefacer denies. (2.) He finds the Prefacer is a professed friend to presbytery, and to our solemn covenants, as well as to subordinate tests of orthodoxy: and therefore he must first affirm, that the Prefacer veils his real principles under a mask; (as himself, on a certain occasion, imposed on *his own presbytery* \*); and then boldly assert, that the very reverse of all these are the Prefacer's real sentiments.—And who can tell but the *Defender* may prevail on some people to believe *his* word, without any further enquiry? (3.) He is sometimes cautious enough to let alone these points, which he knew could not be set in a fair light, nor consist with the credit of his party: witness his forbearing to explain the distressing facts, hinted at in my friend's *queries*. Mr *Gib* declines answering them; and gives these reasons for declining the difficult task:—"It would be business too low for this place, to chastise the arrogance, impertinencies, and improprieties in the Prefacer's manner of writing; with the malicious constructions and suppositions, as also the virulent calumnies about LOOSE PROCEDURE in covenanting-work, which are cast upon the Associate Synod, in that *Preface*: but he, and his correspondent, whose invective he adopts, are left to the free enjoyment of whatever satisfaction they can find in such measures of scurrility and slander." [p. 356. 357.]—Had Mr *Gib* been able to give a more particular answer, no doubt we should have got it: but, alas! our readers may see the humbling facts, implied in my correspondent's questions, in every corner of the country where they find any number of Antiburghers. (4.) In order to make the *Prefacer* to appear ridiculous or contemptible, he finds it very convenient to conceal, alter, or add something that relates to the obvious doctrine and scope of the *Preface*.—I shall select a few examples from many more in his performance.

The *Prefacer's* friend asks, "In the present broken state of the church, when the fearers of God are so remarkably divided in judgment, have we, in these circumstances, any scripture-warrant for covenanting? or at least for imposing this work on the people of God? Can the ends of edification be promoted, in such circumstances, by that work?"—But Mr *Gib* prudently conceals that state of the question, and presents it to his reader in this form:—"Have we in" (present) "circumstances, any

"scripture-warrant for covenanting?" [p. 359.] This concealment is a manifest disadvantage to the *Prefacer*; but then it is, in the same proportion, a service to the cause of the *Defender*. p. 23.

Again, the *Prefacer* says, "To make a covenant with the Lord, in any other circumstances, and for any other purposes, than to bind unto duties PRESENTLY INCUMBENT on the covenanters, in virtue of their present and peculiar situation in providence; or to fortify themselves against present and peculiar dangers; or to promote a present reformation among themselves;—is equally contrary to scripture and common sense."—When Mr *Gib* comments on the burghers-oath, he places a capital emphasis on the word *presently*; and so does the *Prefacer* in that period. But as the *Defender* intended a home-thrust at the *Prefacer*, he has taken no notice of that significant word. I shall restore it, and then Mr *Gib*'s remark will stand thus:—"That any duty can be founded upon providential circumstances, as being [PRESENTLY] INCUMBENT in virtue of them, and connected only with them; or as duties which had no foundation before these circumstances, nor will have any after them: all this is certainly a very gross imagination."

[p. 358.] It is not to be supposed, Mr *Gib* neglected to insert this word through inadvertency, because when it is put in its place, it refines what is called a *very gross imagination*, and now appears to be one of the first principles of religion and moral conduct; especially as every body (except Mr *Gib*) allows, that *duties presently incumbent* are *duties to be presently PERFORMED*, and not, as he insinuates, *duties that require an obligation*.—Besides, what does he mean, when he says, *solemn covenanting is but an occasional duty*? Surely what is a *duty*, and yet *occasional*, must be *presently incumbent ONLY* in these *providential circumstances*, which precisely constitute the *occasion* of that duty. Mr *Gib* knows very well, that this is all the *Prefacer* meant; but he could not have decently enjoyed his censure, if he had confessed what he knew. p. 22.

The *Prefacer* says, "In any of these circumstances, a public covenant or vow may be made unto the Lord, concerning the performance of these duties, the avoiding of these dangers, or the reformation from these sins and errors. These are the *only cases* wherein the church is *authorised*, by *scripture example and command*, to make a covenant concerning sin or duty, truth or error. —Such were the occasions of the covenants in *Horeb*, *Exod. xx.* *Lev. xxv.* and *xxvi.* chapters, and in the land of *Moab*, *Deut. xxix.* &c." *Preface*, &c. p. 5.—Mr *Gib* ingeniously finds out a meaning for the *Prefacer* in these words, a meaning too that

never entered into his head : and having invented a sense which he thinks sufficient to make the sentiment appear contemptible, he has the courage to affirm that they imply a very bad idea. His words are these;—“ Thus, though the Prefacer gives some room to the words *duty* and *command*, he gives none to their sense, with regard to covenanting; but really turns it off the footing of *duty* and *obligation* in any case; to rest only upon the footing of mere warrant, as what may be, or is authorized by scripture example and command.”

21. [p. 357.] Must not the world pity or despise a man who is so weak as to write in this manner? Is there nothing more than a bare permission implied in *authorising any thing by scripture example and command*? I have not yet seen Mr Gib's Second Volume on the maintenance of the Secession-testimony; but he will no doubt tell us therein, what he takes to be the meaning of that expression of the burghers-oath,—“ *authorized by the laws of this realm*.” To be *authorized by scripture example and command*, is understood by every body to mean a *binding obligation*.—In opposition to such as deny the warrantableness of public covenants or vows, the Prefacer says they may be made; and in opposition to these who admit the warrantableness of such covenants, but deny the divine obligation to make them, he says, *the church is authorized by scripture example and command to do so*. But the mystery will remain till Mr Gib be pleased to explain it, how the Prefacer's expression can be so very criminal, and the Defender's expressions can be innocent. The scope of his sermon, printed in the first part of the first Appendix\* is, to prove “the WARRANTABLENESS and duty of solemn covenanting.” Pray, what right has this gentleman to oblige the world to adopt his very words? May not others chuse to speak in the language familiar to mankind, without submitting to either his dictates or his censures.

I cannot always applaud the honesty of the Defender of solemn covenanting; but it gives me pleasure, for his own sake, to find the following apology in his Defence, &c.—“The gross insult committed upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament, by the Prefacer's pretending to find any foundation in them for such doctrines, deserves no particular answer.” [p. 361.]—While Mr Gib leaves me in the possession of these scriptures, which are my strong-hold, it appears, that he is either indifferent about the honour of these texts, or that he finds it impossible to rescue them out of the Prefacer's hands. I am sincerely glad, the Defender had so much reverence for the word of God, as restrained him from at-



tempting to *wrest* it, on the present occasion. I can laugh at all the severe things he says against the *Preface* and its *Author*; but I do unfeignedly rejoice, when the *Defender* forbears to *pervert the truths and ways of God*.

The *Prefacer* complains of the *Antiburghers*, and their acknowledgment of sins in covenanting, because they neither attend particularly to such sins of the generation as are in *present being and strength*; nor to such sins as are to be *found with themselves, even with themselves, against the Holy One of Israel*; but they “insist on many antiquated facts in their confession of sins, which have comparatively little influence on present conduct.” — To justify the heaviest censure Mr *Gib* can inflict with his pen upon the *Prefacer*, he finds it necessary to affirm, that the *Prefacer* “plainly includes ALL the facts mentioned in their confession of sins, under the character of antiquated facts.” [p. 378.] The *Preface*, &c. p. 39. expressly says, *MANY antiquated facts*; but Mr *Gib* says *ALL* of them. The world might derive an advantage from Mr *Gib*’s ingenuity, if they were disposed to submit to his direction; namely, to know their own liberty as to “words” and “the arbitrary stile of language.” [p. 363.] When the *Prefacer* speaks of “*MANY things*,” it is necessary to persuade the world that he “plainly includes ALL things:” and then the triumph will be quite complete. A large measure of assurance is sometimes as requisite as a scrupulous conscience, when a man has the trifling forms of language to supercede; but, as Mr *Gib* observes, an argument built even upon the uniform language of scripture itself, may rest on a sandy foundation. He adds, “The question is not about how” a thing “was called, but about what it was; not about words, but about the matter of the thing; not about the arbitrary stile of language, but about the necessary import of the deed.” *ibid.* Here is the wisdom of the serpent! This state of the question deprives me of every method of self-defence; nay, I must not so much as complain when he says, that the *Prefacer*’s many facts means ALL facts—that the *Prefacer*’s duty authorised by scripture example and command, implies no more but a mere warrant; without any obligation concerning it—and that the *Prefacer*’s PLEA for public covenanting in three cases, is, an offering up all HOMAGE to God in solemn covenanting, as a great sacrifice to the idol of his own malignancy. So that the meaning of words, and the stile of language, can neither defend the *Prefacer*, nor injure the cause Mr *Gib* maintains!—No wonder that this gentleman always claims the victory! his enemies are creatures of his own fancy.

ARTICLE 3. The CANDOUR and sincerity of this upright gentleman,

gentleman, are emblazoned on his works, and particularly on his *Defence of solemn covenanting*, in opposition to the *Preface of a late Survey*. His impartiality, fairness, and plain-dealing, are transmitted to posterity in that *Defence*, for their learning and imitation.—It might be reasonably expected, that while Mr *Gib* is professedly explaining and enforcing the binding obligation of covenants, vows, and oaths, he would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as he really thinketh in his heart, without any sort of equivocation or mental reservation; even as good critics exemplify their rules of criticism, in their manner of writing on the subject. For my own part, I am willing to allow that he would neither have been more honest, fair, and upright, than he is; nor would have kept a more cautious distance from all appearances of misrepresenting the *Prefacer's* meaning, than he has done;—even though he had taken a solemn oath to act as in the sight of God, when he sat down to write his *Defence*, &c.: and further, I consent that this declaration, made by one whom he calls his *adversary*, shall operate as much in his favours, as the words of it, when taken in an equitable construction, can possibly admit.

The reader must suppose, if he can, that all the *polite expressions* in the *Defence*, &c. some of which have been mentioned on the first article; and all the traces of *prudence* therein, some of which have been investigated on the second article;—are nothing else but *meekness of wisdom*, James iii. 13. To insinuate a doubt concerning this, might be highly detrimental to the respect due to Mr *Gib's* candour and integrity.

It may seem to be very difficult to conceive, how many common people should be able to understand any thing about *Arianism*, *Arminianism*, *Deism*, *Prelacy*, and *Latitudinarian tenets*; I mean about the import of the *several systems* that are described by these names, except upon the authority of Seceding ministers: and it is perhaps equally inconceivable, how they should attain such a full persuasion of many things mentioned in the acknowledgment of sins, as “excludes all controversy about the truth of the facts,” and the statement of these facts, except upon the authority aforesaid. Yet Mr *Gib* assures us, their covenanters do understand these doctrines, and are “fully satisfied about the truth of all the facts narrated in the confession” of sins; but he says, “a baser calumny cannot be devised, than a giving out, that people are called to take *some doctrines*,” or “to take any *facts*, merely upon the authority of Seceding ministers.” Yea, he proves the *Prefacer* to be one of the basest calumniators for having insinuated, that their people are called to take

take these facts upon the authority of Seceding ministers, by this conclusive argument;—"All the facts do lie in the most public and authentic records and histories of the kingdom." p. 378. This argument is so very conclusive, p. 39. that it must cover the *Prefacer* with shame, whenever it can be further declared, "that their covenanters are known to have derived their information from such records and histories."—Till Mr Gib be pleased to give the world more satisfaction on this point, we must leave every thing on the candour and veracity of his own word.

I apprehend we must also leave some other positions in the *Defence*, &c. to stand on the same foundation; such as, that the *Prefacer's* doctrine "wickedly strikes at the root of all covenanting work, yea, of all engagement to any subordinate standards as tests of orthodoxy, in any period of the Christian church;"—that it "upon the matter justifies all those wicked laws, by which the standing obligation of our solemn covenants was condemned;" and—that the *Prefacer's* "own conscience could not but say, that he is an enemy to covenanting." These charges are supported—by what evidence?—By the *Preface*, &c.? or, by the consent of the *Prefacer*? No: but by the unsupported candour and veracity of Mr Gib's affirmation, who is witness, judge, and jury, in finding the truth of all the foregoing imputations. Accordingly he pronounces the following sentence upon the convict.—"He certainly is an enemy to covenanting, as really (however differently) as any who ever passed under the character of malignants, in former days of covenanting." The Public has a manifold security upon Mr Gib for his candour and integrity in the present *Defence*, &c. 1. It is placed immediately after one of his own sermons, upon "*The warrants for solemn covenanting under the New Testament*:" and no doubt the spirit and temper of the preacher are transfused into the *Defence*, &c. 2. It stands in a work intitled, "*The present TRUTH*." 3. It is written by one who "has had an early and special concern in the Secession-cause, giving him occasion for particular acquaintance with it, more than any other member now remaining in the Associate Synod." 4. His *Defence*, &c.; together with the rest of his performance, must be considered, "not only as a piece of justice to that cause before the world, and a necessary information for posterity, but also as a matter of duty to the friends of it." Now, it can never be supposed, that he would either deceive the world, or mislead poste-



erty, or impose upon his friends; far less can it be imagined, that he will so much as attempt to do all this at once. By Mr Gib's third canon of criticism, recorded in the introduction to this performance, it must be *grossly absurd* to impute to him any thing like *disimulation* or *disingenuity*. (5.) It is a material circumstance on this head, that he liberally acknowledges the *Prefacer's* merit, where-ever he could discover it: for instance, he says of the *Prefacer's* idea of *renewing covenants*,  
 p. 25. "it is wholly of his own invention." p. 361. This is a most convincing proof of his impartiality to an adversary! A few examples of this sort are sufficient to give a sanction to the candour of the severest disputant, that ever employed his pen in the field of controversy! especially if it be further considered, (6.) That Mr Gib carefully distinguishes between the innocent and the guilty. He says of the representation the *Prefacer* had given of the principles of the *Burghers*, concerning the obligation of our solemn covenants, that *it is hoped* the representation is *most injurious* to THEM. Now, as he is well known not to be on very good terms with the *Burghers*, and yet does *them* the justice to *vindicate them* from the injurious *Prefacer*,—(which, by the bye, is a greater testimony of *his* concern for *their* honour, than they have ever shewn for it themselves); must not every reader be fully satisfied, that Mr Gib has censured the *Prefacer* with reason, justice, and impartiality?

These are "intrinsic and infallible evidences in Mr Gib's performance itself, *that it must be so*; or that the case cannot, even by the utmost rational stretch of charity, be *supposed otherwise*," as to his candour, integrity, and fair-dealing in this defence, &c.

ARTICLE 4. THE WHOLE Mr Gib's Defence contains is not very fertile; no doubt the importance of his subject, and the design of his performance, confined his genius. But if any body wishes to see the abilities he possesses in this kind of writing, and his free turn of thinking, unrestrained by the pedantic rules of nature, art, or excessive decency; such a person may see a tolerable specimen in "a LUDICROUS SHEET," as Mr Gib himself calls it †, "published in winter 1766," with this title, *Up and war them a' Willie*. His own three elders speak of it in the following terms.—"It is on a religious subject; and in it the piety of our worthy pastor is very conspicuous, particularly in embellishing his page with quotations from a *barbary song*, for clearing the

• Preface to Refuge of lies swept away, &c. p. 9.

† Refuge, &c. p. 134.

"spirits of a *certain class* of his readers \*." I hope their account of the matter is injurious to him; but a man of *humour*, notwithstanding his utmost caution, will sometimes be transported into his own element. The *Defence of solemn covenanting*, &c. furnishes a few instances of this native bias in its author.

An ingenious writer has taken pains to shew, "that it is impossible for any thought to be beautiful which is not just: that the basis of all wit is truth: and that no thought can be valuable, of which good sense is not the ground-work. This is that *natural* way of writing, that beautiful simplicity, which we so much admire in the compositions of the ancients; and which no body deviates from, but those who want strength of genius to make a thought shine in its own natural beauties †."

The *Prefacer's* doctrine is, that "covenanting should always be managed with a view to *the time to come*. Mercies that have been received, and transgressions of the law of God, in time past, may, and should be considered as motives to this duty; but the duty itself carries the mind only forward to future conduct. The covenant the Jews made, in the days of *Nehemiah*, had only a respect to present reformation, and future duties: and therefore they say,—"*Because of all this*" series of mercies, judgments, and provocations, "*we make a sure covenant*," namely, to perform future duties, and to reform the present disorders and sins among us, Neh. ix. 38."—Though this position seems to be plain enough, and scarcely in danger of being misunderstood by any reader who has the smallest understanding of the subject; it affords Mr *Gib* an occasion to smoothe his brow for a moment with a little "sneering" and pleasantries. "This pedantic observation," says he, "might be taken, *at first view*, as supposing all his readers to be *arrant fools*: for who but such could ever imagine, that any might pretend a present covenanting, or engaging to do something in the time past; while not a moment of that time can ever be recalled for a new-doing of any thing in it? Do people need to be taught, that they should not engage to-day, that they will do something yesterday?" If the reader stop here, he may suppose that this ridicule falls upon the *Prefacer*; but if he has patience to proceed to the next paragraph of the *Defense*, &c. he will find, that it is only intended against these "*arrant fools*," who are so dull

\* See their Reasons of Protest, p. 27.

† Spectator, No. 62.

as to imagine that the *Prefacer* deserves to be so ridiculed: for Mr *Gib* assures us, that the same *Prefacer* is more rogue than fool. He tells us to beware of *that observation* in the *Preface*, &c. because, with all its appearance of truth and simplicity, "*there is a snake in the grass*;" it conceals a  
 23. "*base intendment*." [p. 360.] It gives me real pleasure to have this opportunity of returning my best thanks to Mr *Gib*, for the service his pointed and well-directed satire must render to an "*observation*" which is the very hinge of the *Prefacer's* "*new doctrine*." To deny the observation is said to be as unreasonable, as it would be, to teach people that they should *engage to-day*, that they *will do something yesterday*; and every body, even *arrant fools* themselves, must allow, that such doctrine is both *false* and *foolish*. Mr *Gib* allows that, "*AT FIRST VIEW*," the *Prefacer's* observation seems to be as true, as that contrasted comparison seems to be non-sensical, and even impossible.

The *Prefacer* says, "The matter of the Jewish covenants was only a reformation FROM *their own sins*, and the future practice of their own duty:—the nature of their covenant was a solemn engagement to *reform their own present sins*, and to perform their duty in time to come:—they made their covenant concerning the reformation of *their own sins*."—Mr *Gib* is very pleasant, and very pious too, in his *candid* ridicule on this passage, telling his reader, with great solemnity and politeness, that, "in the above words, the *Prefacer* once and again blunders upon a very hard task for his covenanters, even beyond the reach of Omnipotence; which, though it can *make an end* of sins, cannot *reform* them." [p. 360.] It was well the "*abominable spirit*" of these words in the *Preface*, &c. did not rouse the *Defender's* gentle temper into an exclamation, *What horrible doctrine is this!* For the reader must believe—it he is so disposed—that the *Prefacer* is of opinion, that *sins may be sanctified!* or that *sin may be transformed into holiness!* or that *vice may become virtue!* It cannot be to the purpose, if the *Prefacer* remind Mr *Gib* of some expressions in his *Preface*, &c. which explain his meaning, and vindicate his orthodoxy, such as, "*the sins they engaged to put away*,"—"*engaging to reform themselves*, and to perform their own duty," and others of the same import: nor will I insist on a like figure of speech in the sacred oracles, to justify the offensive expressions; both because the *Defender* might politely reply, that such examples are "*pedantically lugged in*," and because it might tempt him to try his wit upon the scriptures themselves; though any other person may compare the *De-*  
*fender's*



*sender's* remark with Is. i. 18. "Though your *sins* be as scarlet, THEY SHALL BE WHITE AS SNOW, &c." But I will endeavour to satisfy Mr *Gib* upon better grounds than these. He knows very well what regard is due to the *contents* of the chapters in our Bibles, prefixed by the translators. When their words are in Mr *Gib's* favours, they are almost equivalent to an express determination of scripture; and I know no reason why they may not be adduced also for the *Prefacer*. The strange marriages of the Jews, and their violation of the Sabbath, were undoubtedly their *sins*: now, the translators have set *Ezra's reformation of marriages*, in the running title over Ezra x.; and *Nehemiah reformeth the violation of the Sabbath, and the marriages with strange wives*, are a part of the *contents* prefixed to Neh. xiii.—I hope this authority will induce Mr *Gib* to cancel his witticism on the phrase of *reforming sins*: or, if reason and justice must be sacrificed to humour, he must allow, that many more valuable characters than that of the *Prefacer* will be in the same condemnation. Mr *Gib* must know, that the idea of *reforming sins*, and *rectifying disorders*, is common enough. Men of wit are sometimes to self-willed, that they will rather hazard the loss of a friend, than conceal their joke: Mr *Gib* goes further; he boldly ventures the credit, both of his understanding, his charity, and his learning, without any care or concern about the *certain consequences* of the amazing risk;—and all for the pleasure of a jest!

The *Defender* makes himself very pleasant with "the *gospel-scheme*," which he says the *Prefacer* has "pedantically *lugged in*," to illustrate the nature of *acts and deeds of co-covenanting*. [p. 367.] Mr *Gib's* words are—"As to the *gospel-scheme*, (here pedantically *lugged in*), "what need is there p. 30.  
"for any man to understand it, in order to prevent his  
"calling things as above expressed? A moderate knowledge  
"of the common-sense *scheme*, may certainly serve the pur-  
"pose.—Yet will the *Prefacer's gospel-scheme* allow him to  
"say about a new act of faith and love, (as he argues about  
"new covenanting), that it contains no approbation of, no  
"adherence to, any former attainment or engagement in  
"this matter!—So far as any thing in these words has a  
*show* of argument, it will come to be examined in the third  
section: at present I am only concerned with the *sportive*  
*humour* they exhibit. I believe the *Defender* will not ascribe  
the term *gospel-scheme* to the invention of the *Prefacer*: this  
would be doing him an honour he does not deserve, and  
cannot justly claim: and I cannot suppose he will reckon *all*  
that have used it, *pedants*.—Indeed both the *name* and the  
import

import of the *gospel-scheme*, are so sacred with the *Prefacer*, that he must forget Mr *Gib* the moment they are brought to his view. "As a mad-man who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour," much more the man, the *minister*! that speaketh ludicrously of the *gospel-scheme*,—"and saith, Am not I in sport?" Prov. xxvi. 18. 19. Had Mr *Gib* proved, nay, had he but affirmed, that the *Prefacer* has misconceived or perverted the *gospel-scheme*, the liberties he takes with the expression had been less inexcusable; but holding it up to derision, as he does, without any provocation of that sort, yea, without pretending any such provocation, is a great excess of wantonness and levity, if not worse.—So much for his *wit*.

ARTICLE 5. THE MODESTY of Mr *Gib's Defence*, &c. is something like a man's *habitual manner of behaviour*; and, as he says on a particular occasion, this manner of behaviour is "one thing, which, according to the nature of it, would come to be lost, and vanish, just so far as it should be distinguished into a number of things. Such an article, in its very nature, is not to be supported by a number of particular instances\*."—Therefore, in order to evince the *modesty* of this gentleman, I must not attempt to collect so many particular examples of that amiable disposition. This would indeed be a difficult task. But I am happily directed to another criterion, and that is, "a general testimony of such as have had access to know him, upon their common observation†." However, as Mr *Gib* tells us, that his character has been singularly traduced among his acquaintances, "having been in some measure made a *gazing-stone*, both by reproaches and afflictions, more, perhaps, than any other of his character at this day‡;" it would be ungenerous to call him to hazard a determination at *that* bar, which might *probably* be adverse to his reputation, all circumstances considered.

But there is still one unexceptionable method remaining, and I humbly conceive the properest method, of settling this article of character, upon the surest grounds: and that is, to consider *how* Mr *Gib* speaks, and what he says, (1.) of *himself*; (2.) of *his adversaries*; (3.) of *his own cause*; (4.) of *the cause of his adversaries*; (5.) of *his own party*; and (6.) of *the party that adhere to his adversary*.—An attention to these things, which may very easily be found in all his writings, will precisely ascertain the modesty of Mr *Gib*,—a character he perhaps was not much conscious of while he was composing

\* *Refuge*, &c. p. 144.

† *Refuge*, &c. *ibid.*

‡ *Refuge*, &c. p. 191. them.

them. To collect from all his performances, would be endless toil, and moreover it is altogether needless: for one spirit pervades the whole of them.—I shall only select a few things on these six heads from his present *Defence*, &c. and his general *Preface*.

1. When Mr *Gib* has occasion to speak of HIMSELF, he ought to be heard. The account he gives of himself in the note on the sixth page of his *Preface* to "The present Truth: a display of the Secession-testimony,"—contains the following interesting facts, "He entered to the university of Edinburgh in winter 1730.—He was present, during the next three years, in most, if not all the meetings of the General Assembly, and their commissions.—From what he observed at some of these meetings, he came to a resolution in winter 1732, to acknowledge no connection with the judicatories of the established church; (even before any Secession was thought of by the ministers!)—He was then in no connection or acquaintance with any of the ministers who afterwards composed the Associate Presbytery.—When the Synod of Perth and Stirling, in October 1735, enrolled the intruder into the parish of Muckhart (to which he belonged); he gave in to that Synod, a declaration of Secession from them, and all the other judicatories of the established church.—Of that declaration he got extracts from the Synod-clerk.—No answer, it is supposed, have ever yet been agreed upon" to his declaration.—"In December following, the extracts of that declaration of Secession were laid before the Associate Presbytery, with a declaration of Accession to them; which were then received.—N. B. The first ever received by them.—He was present in most of the meetings of that Presbytery afterwards, till he was licensed on the 5th of March 1740.—He was ordained at Edinburgh, on the 2d of April 1741.—Since that time he has been kept in the way of exerting his capacity for the service of the Secession-cause.—He considers it as the distinguishing happiness of his earthly condition, that he has been so far kept in this way, as to render him a principal butt for the arrows of its adversaries from all quarters; particularly, as to the malignant abuse committed upon him by a late writer [the Prefacer], (among some others), whom he will have ado with in the end of this, and also of the next volume."—He concludes, "It is an honour, as a strong presumption of being on the Lord's side, to meet with such usage from one of that writer's complexion."

Mr *Gib* has been represented often to the world as a *Diotrephes*, who loved to have the pre-eminence in the Secession; but



But now he has modestly established his claim to superior honours: for where can a man be found that resolved to be a Seceder *so early* as in winter 1732? or that weighed the reasons of that resolution more carefully? or that was less influenced in that resolution by the opinions of men? or that proceeded in his Secession more regularly? or that gave in his accession *so soon*? or that attended the meetings of the Associate Presbytery *so long*, and *so constantly*? or that has been kept *so stedfast* in his attachment to the Secession-cause? or that has been so active in *exerting his capacity* for the service of that cause? or that has *suffered so much* for it? or that has so uniformly been *abused* by all the adversaries of it, **MERELY** because he was a defender of that cause? or that has been a sort of *fortification* and *buttress* around its friends, to repel and exhaust the arrows of its adversaries? or finally, that has been so much honoured with *malignant abuse*, which he has always borne with *exemplary meekness*?—We must believe, it was with great reluctance that Mr Gib prevailed on himself to give such a recommendation to his own performance; but the necessity of the times, and the design of his book, rendered it expedient that the truth should be told, and *compelled him to glory*, no doubt much against his will!

2. His modesty is conspicuously displayed, whenever he has occasion to speak of *his adversaries*. They are a set of *proud, haughty* mortals; and their temper is so directly opposite to Mr Gib's humble spirit, that he embraces every opportunity to *mortify their vanity*. This is very evident from the foregoing *Defence*, &c. wherein he assures the public, that my *Preface*, &c. is "arrant nonsense, *impudently* palmed up—on the world—horrible doctrine against all obligation of oaths or covenants—the most daring outrage upon the work of bearing witness for Christ, yea, upon the rights of the divine holiness, that has ever been committed under the colour of friendship to our covenanted reformation."—And speaking of the *Prefacer* himself, he says, "It is to be considered as one of the steps of the Lord's righteous judgment upon a backsliding generation, that he has permitted this man to *rise up with a brow of brass*, under a delusive mask of friendship to our covenanted reformation, for seducing the Lord's people from any genuine regard to it, and for promoting the present apostacy from a witnessing profession.—When the *Survey* comes to be considered, there will appear a further verifying of that awful prediction, *Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.*"

These passages shew that Mr Gib was particularly grieved at the Prefacer's pride and impudence, because he *had risen up with a brow of brass*, &c.; and therefore the Defender uses every mortifying expression, to make *that man* sensible how exceedingly detested his arrogance was by this modest gentleman!—Perhaps ordinary readers have not perceived this to be the reason why Mr Gib uses so many hard names against the Preface, &c. and its author; but if these names were dictated by a noble indignation against *impudence* and *pride*, they will bear witness of *his delicacy* and *humble spirit*, as long as the work that records them shall be read with *knowledge* and approbation among posterity.

3. The light wherein Mr Gib considers *his own cause*, is a further evidence of his modesty. He honours it, taken complexly, with an *exclusive title* to be reckoned “The present truth!—the Secession-cause!—the Lord's work!—our co-venanted work of reformation! and—a witnessing profession!” The unaffected modesty of this claim is too evident to admit of either a proof or an illustration. Yet,

4. The implied view of *the cause maintained by his adversaries*, is an additional demonstration of his own modesty. He was never known to engage against an adversary, except in some particular and extraordinary cases. He always either *found or made the cause of his adversaries*, a very bad one; stamping it with the characters, “horrible, blasphemous, awful, dreadful, horrid,” &c. &c. &c. He must be blind indeed, who cannot perceive the rousing provocation, given to a zealous mind, by such doctrines and tempers as have come in Mr Gib's way!—*Doctrines and tempers*, that merit *another sort of reply* than Mr Gib USUALLY gives them! as even his adversaries themselves must allow.

5. The character he gives of *his own party*, is a remarkable instance of modesty. They are said to be “friends of the Secession-cause!—the Lord's people!—making an appearance on the Lord's side, and valiant for the truth upon the earth,—in the way of solemn covenanting.” Such are the titles he appropriates to his party in *Scotland, England, Ireland, and America!* No body can blush in pleading for *such clients!*

6. The characters he draws for *the party that adheres to his adversary*, are dark and striking. He describes them as “backsliding saints!—a backsliding generation!—supposed fearers of God!” &c. &c. —Having given them such names, it is rather to be wondered that he is so very moderate with them, than that he has used some severity against them.

ARTICLE 6. THE CONSISTENCY of Mr Gib's *Defence*, &c. is the next point to be considered. Here I shall only propose a few difficulties to the *Defender*, (if he happen to see my performance); and shall wait for his resolution of them, when he finds it convenient, as they are too hard for me.

1. Do not you allow, Sir, "that *covenanting is but an occasional duty*?" You say, "none ever disputed" this. [p. 357.] Yet you say, "it is very singular, even not supposable, as what ever did or can exist, that the church should have a *providential call* to some important duties *connected only with her present condition*." [p. 358.] Must not this be *always* the case with regard to *all such duties as are but occasional*?"

2. You say, "It may well be reckoned very odd, to state a comparison betwixt *permanent deeds* in the church, and *transient acts* in the mind; as if there could be any sense in arguing from the one to the other." [p. 367.] *Covenanting* is here considered as a *permanent deed* in the church, and living by faith, and walking in love, as *transient acts in the mind*. Now, Sir, I beg leave to ask, How *covenanting* which is *but an occasional duty*, comes to be called a *permanent deed*? And further, How a *life of faith and walking in love* can be denominated *transient acts*?—If you reckon *covenanting* a *permanent deed*, because it constitutes a permanent obligation; should you not also reckon *living by faith, and walking in love*, something much more than *transient acts of the mind*?—But this distinction must be examined in another section.

3. If "the assurance which is in the direct *act of faith*, is founded upon the word ONLY \*;" how come you, Sir, to put the following question—"Will the *Prefacer's* gospel-scheme allow him to say, about a new act of faith,—that it contains no approbation of, no adherence to, any former attainment or engagement in this matter?" [p. 367.]—Does not your question imply an idea, directly opposite to the doctrine laid down by the *Presbytery*? Yea, does it not set the *acts of faith* upon the footing of *permanent deeds* in the mind? While I cannot but apprehend your views in that matter, to be widely different both from scripture and reason; how can I help thinking that you allow, *there is sense in arguing from FAITH and LOVE to COVENANTING*?—and from the exercise of the mind upon the word of God in the one case, to the exercise of it upon the same word in the other?

4. You tell us, that "facts above a thousand years back were confessed at *covenanting* in *Nehemiah's* time, under a very different consideration" from that of being antiquated

\* See the Associate Presbytery's act concerning the Doctrine of grace.  
facts.



facts. [p. 379.] Yet you say, when speaking of the acknowledgment of sins, prefixed to the Seceding bond—"That  
 "acknowledgment *commences* with the begun fall of reformation-work, in the last century; without going back upon  
 "any mistakes or mismanagements, in the preceding work  
 "of reformation: because EVILS OF THIS SORT cannot be  
 "properly ranked among the *standing grounds of the Lord's*  
 "controversy with their posterity; OR ANY OTHER EVILS  
 "but these which belong to the succeeding course of apostacy from  
 "that reformation." [p. 372.]—Reserving my remarks on p. 34.  
 this sentiment for another section, I must ask you, Sir, How  
 it is possible, according to your own account, to reconcile  
 the acknowledgment of sins, used by your party, with the  
 example of confessing sins in *Nehemiah's* time? You CON-  
 FINE your confession to a period of *ninety-three* years; in his  
 days, sins *above a thousand* years back were confessed at cove-  
 nanting. How dare you henceforth say, you are going forth  
 by the *footsteps of the flock*?—Again, you tell us, that "any  
 "mistakes or mismanagements in the preceding work of re-  
 "formation," viz. before the year 1650, "cannot be pro-  
 "perly ranked among the *standing grounds of the Lord's con-*  
 "troversy with their posterity." Yet when speaking of  
 "compulsive methods of dealing with men, in matters of con-  
 "science or mere religion," you express yourself in these  
 terms—"At the time of the reformation in the last century,  
 "some specious remains of the leaven of that abomination,  
 "had not been got entirely purged out; the natural rights of  
 "conscience were not generally understood: and some work-  
 "ings of that leaven, in the compulsory terms which the  
 "Presbyterians of the English parliament and Westminster-  
 "assembly stood upon, when treating with the Independents  
 "of the assembly and army, are what I freely reckon *one*  
 "great spring of the ruin which soon beset the reformation-work  
 "of that period †." Here I must ask, Whether light and  
 darkness are more directly opposite than these propositions?  
 And whether your party is faithful to the generation, in  
 concealing so important a *spring* of the *ruin of reformation-*  
*work*? Was not the spring of that ruin, a *standing ground of*  
*the Lord's controversy with posterity*? And was not that ruin-  
 ing measure "a mistake and mismanagement in the work  
 "of reformation?"

5. You say, it "was never before heard of," that our  
 forefathers "drew up an acknowledgment of sins in 1638."  
 [p. 375.]—Be pleased, Sir, to inform me how this can be p. 3

† Mr Gil's paper in the Scot's magazine, April 1769.

reconciled with your expression that stands in a note on  
 35. page 374. in these words,—“All turns about to ex-  
 36. “clude all *vowing* to the Lord *against prevailing evils*, while  
 “this cannot possibly be without *having a reference made to*  
 “*them in the oath*. Such a *reference or reduplication* as be-  
 “*longed*, though in a different form, *to the bond*, by which  
 “the national covenant was renewed in 1638, no less than  
 “to the bond by which it is renewed among the Anti-  
 “burghers.”—Upon these words, permit me to ask—Whe-  
 ther you do not expressly acknowledge in them, that there  
 were *prevailing evils* in 1768, when the national covenant  
 was renewed?—Whether you do not affirm, that the bond  
 then sworn, was a *vow against these prevailing evils*?—Whe-  
 ther your words do not bear, that there could *not* have been  
 such a *vow against prevailing evils, without making a reference*  
*to them*?—Do not you say, that “*such a reference*” to these  
 prevailing evils, “or *reduplication*” upon them “*belonged to*  
 “*the bond by which the national covenant was renewed in*  
 “1638, no less than to the” deceding “bond?”—When  
 you say, that reference belonged to the bond in 1638 “*in a*  
 “*different form*,” does not this still allow, that there was a  
 reference in some form to *prevailing evils*; and consequent-  
 ly, that *there was an acknowledgment of these evils, or sins,*  
*then made*?—Upon the whole, it seems Mr Gib has heard of  
 “an acknowledgment of sins, or prevailing evils, drawn up  
 “by our forefathers in 1638;” and any body else may hear  
 of it, by reading *the oath* they swore at that period.

Some other examples of *his consistency* are ready to be pro-  
 duced, upon a certificate under the seal of public approbation,  
 concerning all these that have been mentioned,—declaring,  
 that the *whole of them* are perfectly harmonious, consistent,  
 and uniform; and that *all the objections* I have urged to the  
 contrary, are nothing but a repetition of *malignant abuse* a-  
 gainst the *Defender of solemn covenanting*, &c.

ARTICLE 7. Mr Gib's talents in CRITICISM, deserve a  
 place in every attempt to *display the spirit* of his performan-  
 ces. *Criticism* is the art of *judging with propriety of men and*  
*things, according to their nature; with candour, taste, and un-*  
*derstanding*.—His abilities in this art are very conspicuous,  
 through his whole performance. Perhaps I do not so much  
 admire them as *some other readers*; but this cannot derogate  
 from his merit in the least, as *every reader* must allow: for  
 Mr Gib tells me, I am *his adversary*; and besides, he says my  
 notions are both *impious, and monstrously absurd*. I am dis-  
 qualified from being so much as an *evidence* in any court of  
 justice, where Mr Gib is a party to the cause; how much  
 more

more to be a competent *judge* of his performance; wherein I am a party against him? However, I shall presume to offer a few animadversions on the *Defender's* application of divers places of scripture.

1. I had said in the *Preface*, &c. "In the continued living  
" by faith, and walking in love, the Christian should fix his  
" whole attention, not on what he has attained to, but on the  
" faithful word and sovereign authority of JEHOVAH. The  
" very same was the case of the Jews, who entered into co-  
" venant with God; and the same should be the case with  
" Christians too in their covenanting, according to that ex-  
" press directory, Rev. iii. 3. *Remember how thou hast recei-  
" ed, and heard, and hold fast, and repent.*"—Mr Gib there-  
" upon exclaims—"Strange! May not the *Prefacer* now  
" make any thing a proof for any thing? Is not this text an  
" *express directory* for the *very reverse*, even for *turning back*  
" *their attention* to FORMER ATTAINMENTS; in order to a  
" *holding THEM fast*, with repentance for their failings in  
" that matter?" p. 366.

p. 29.

In this remark Mr Gib does not insinuate, that the text [Rev. iii. 3.] is *misapplied* when it is referred to religious vows or covenants: he only says it is *misunderstood*, when it is supposed to refer *immediately* to "the faithful word and sovereign authority of JEHOVAH," speaking to the churches in the scriptures. When Christians are directed to "remember how they have received, and heard, and to hold fast, and repent," he says they are expressly directed to "turn back their attention to former attainments, in order to a holding them fast, with repentance for their failings in that matter." I have heard of some common people among the Antiburghers, who gloried in that directory to the church in *Sardis*, as a sufficient confutation of the doctrine established in my *Preface*, &c.; but I could never allow myself to believe, that any of their ministers would encourage them in that way of thinking, till Mr Gib's *Defence*, &c. convinced me of my mistake.—I was so simple as to hope, that every one who read the *Preface*, &c. with any care, would agree with me, in understanding that passage as an express directory, "to keep  
" our attention wholly engaged upon *the faith once delivered*  
" *to the saints* in the word of God, where we receive it, and  
" hear it; and to hold fast the form of sound words, which  
" we receive and hear from the lively oracles; and to repent  
" from these dead works, which are contrary to the revealed  
" will of God. The word of God is what we have received  
" and heard; the word of God is what we are command-  
" ed to hold fast, Tit. i. 9.; and the word of God is our  
" only



"only guide to evangelical repentance. These things we are called to *remember*, in the same sense as we are called to *remember the sabbath-day*, &c. Exod. xx. 8.—11."

To support this interpretation, the reader may consult Mal. iv. 4. "REMEMBER YE THE LAW of Moses my servant, WHICH I COMMANDED unto him in *Horeb* for all Israel, with THE STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS." 2 John 4. "I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children WALKING IN TRUTH, AS WE HAVE RECEIVED A COMMANDMENT from the Father." 1 Cor. xi. 23. "I HAVE RECEIVED OF THE LORD, *that which also I delivered unto you*," &c. Rev. iii. 6. "He that hath an ear, let him HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT SAITH unto the churches." 2 Pet. i. 19. "We have a *more sure word of prophecy*, WHEREUNTO YE DO WELL THAT YE TAKE HEED," &c. 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: *that the man of God may be PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.*" Rev. ii. 13. "*Thou holdest fast* MY NAME, and *hast not denied MY FAITH.*" Mark i. 15. "REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL."—And to conclude, if the *saints* are to "*walk by faith*," 2 Cor. v. 7. their *faith* must "*come by hearing, and their hearing by the WORD OF GOD,*" Rom. x. 17.

In opposition to all this, and an hundred-fold more evidence, Mr Gib affirms, that when we are called to "*remember how we have received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent,*"—we are expressly directed "*to turn back our attention to former attainments, in order to hold them fast, with repentance for our failings in that matter!*"—Is this the way to "*walk by faith*?" or, is it not to "*walk by sight*?" Is this way of exercising ourselves unto godliness, consistent with the word of God? or, can it be reconciled to the evangelical plan of walking with God, delineated in Mr Marshall's *gospel-mystery of sanctification*, to which Mr Gib is no stranger?—Even Mr Gib is concerned to hear that awful charge of God against *Jerusalem*—"My people have committed two evils: they have FORSAKEN me, *the fountain of living waters*, and hewed them out cisterns, BROKEN CISTERNS, THAT CAN HOLD NO WATER, Jer. ii. 13."

What I apprehend has misled Mr Gib in commenting on Rev. iii. 3. is the manner of the expression,—"*Remember how thou hast received,*" &c. Beza translates it,—"*Remember what thou hast received,*" &c.: and it is certain, that the word [HOW] is taken in that very sense, Luke x. 26. "What is written in the law? *how* readest thou?"—But

after

after all, Mr Gib's expression of **TURNING BACK TO FORMER ATTAINMENTS**, in distinction from the *word of God*, is highly dangerous and offensive. I am afraid it has more affinity to "*turning back to weak and beggarly elements*," Gal. iv. 9. than to a "returning unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls," 1 Pet. ii. 25. We read of some people who "return, but not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow," Hof. vii. 16. I do not suppose Mr Gib meant it so; but his expression evidently implies no less, than a returning to *something* that is not God.

2. Another effort of that gentleman's criticism is employed to prove against the *Prefacer*, that both the LORD and ISRAEL in their good times,—ALWAYS had a respect to THEIR FORMER COVENANTINGS." [p. 364. 365.]—The great principle upon which his argument rests, is the following:—  
 "Every COVENANT WHICH THEY MADE, God acknowledged to be *his* covenant; as he said, Jer. xxxiv. 18. *My covenant*, that is, *the covenant which they had made before me*."—It would have been much to Mr Gib's purpose, if he had been able to prove two things on this head: (1.) That the scripture *always* refers to a *covenant made by men*, whenever it speaks of *God's covenant*; and, (2.) That every place where the *covenant of God* is mentioned, must be understood of a *solemn vow* to the Most High. Unless these two things be allowed him, his general principle is good for nothing. However, we may hear what use he makes of it.

He asks, "What was the tenor of God's REPROOFS, relative to SUCH WORK \*? It was this, viz. *This people hath transgressed my covenant, WHICH I COMMANDED THEIR FATHERS, and have not hearkened unto MY VOICE*, Judg. ii. 20.—*Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments, and my statutes, ACCORDING TO ALL THE LAW WHICH I COMMANDED YOUR FATHERS, AND WHICH I SENT TO YOU BY MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks,—and they rejected his statutes, and his COVENANT THAT HE MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS, and his testimonies which he testified against them*, 2 Kings xvii. 13, 14, 15.—*They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them*, Jer. xxii. 9.—*The Lord said unto me, Son of man, hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ORDINANCES of the house of the Lord, and all the LAWS thereof: and thou shalt say to the rebellious,*

\* By such work Mr Gib evidently means, "EVERY COVENANT WHICH ISRAEL MADE:" for so he has described it in the foregoing sentence, or in his general principle.

“even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart and in flesh, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat, and the blood, and they have BROKEN MY COVENANT, because of all your abominations, Ezek. xlv. 5. 6. 7.—They like men have transgressed the covenant, Hof. vi. 7.—They have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law, Hof. viii. 1.”

He proceeds thus,—“What was the tenor of their CONFESSIONS, relative to SUCH WORK \*, when confessing their own sins, and the sins of their fathers? It was this, viz. Thou testifiedst against them, that thou mightest BRING THEM AGAIN UNTO THY LAW: yet they dealt proudly, and hardened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, and withdrew the shoulder, (plainly referring to former engagements), and hardened their neck, and would not hear, Neh. ix. 29.—God established A TESTIMONY in Jacob, and appointed A LAW in Israel, which he commanded our fathers that they should make THEM known to their children. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in HIS LAW. They tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not HIS TESTIMONIES; but turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers, Psal. lxxviii. 5. 10. 56. 57. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have REBELLED, (plainly referring to former allegiance), EVEN BY DEPARTING FROM THY PRECEPTS, AND FROM THY JUDGMENTS, Dan. ix. 5. Ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the LAW. Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? Mal. ii. 9. 10.”

What is his conclusion from these reproofs of God, and confessions of his church? It is this, viz. “Such was the respect which the Lord always had, and which Israel in their good times always had,—to THEIR former covenantings: utterly inconsistent with the new doctrine so boldly palmed upon us by the Prefacer.” [p. 365.] Be not surprised, gentle reader, at this inference from these premises: “Great men are not always wise,” Job xxxii. 9. It may be doubted, whether Mr Gib himself, upon cool reflection, can approve his own reasoning. I will not be too positive, however, in this suspicion; but if his conclusion be allowed to flow from his premises,—if the aforesaid reproofs and confessions refer to covenants or vows Israel made, our Bible

\* See the last note.



assumes quite another face than either commentators or Christians ever suspected before †.

Mr Gib trifles with these expressions, *my covenant, his covenant, rebelled, dealt unfaithfully*, &c. Had he taken the meaning of such words and phrases from the context, every body would have perceived the weakness of his argument at first sight: and if any person is still disposed to think, after I have stated their connection in the foregoing extract, that the LORD'S COVENANT must denote ISRAEL'S VOW, or, A COVENANT THEY MADE WITH THE LORD, I shall only refer him to the scripture-account of IT, in Deut. iv. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. "The Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children. And ye came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain [*Horeb*] burnt with fire,—and the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire:—and he declared unto you HIS COVENANT, which he commanded you to perform, *even ten commandments*; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time, to teach you *statutes and judgments*, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it." Any reader may judge for himself, without calling in either Mr Gib's assistance or mine, that *this* is the covenant referred to in the passages he quotes, and in a great many more he might have quoted to the same effect.—But what doth *such* arguing either prove or confute? I apprehend, "none of his readers, so far as in the exercise of reason, can excuse him" from violating every rule of sound reasoning; while he always supposes, that *God's covenant* denotes *men's engagement*, in all the places of scripture, where that expression is used, or at least in all the places he has referred to!!!

Mr Gib says, "Israel were taught to consider what had been said of old time, in a way of covenanting, as said by themselves, in the loins of their fathers;—*Of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands, and thou saidst, I will not transgress*, Jer. ii. 20.: which required a particular respect and adherence THERETO, a particular sense of obligation THEREBY, in their *new covenantings*." [p. 365.] p. 36  
—Here I ask, To WHAT were they to *adhere*? Not to *their own words* surely; but to *all that the Lord had spoken*, Exod. xix. 8. And further I ask, BY WHAT were they bound? Not

† Mr Gib should either have profited by the distinction the Prefacer states between the Lord's making a covenant with men, and men's making or entering into a covenant with the Lord; or he should have attempted to prove there is no foundation for that distinction. He cannot do the last, because it is so evident: and he has altogether neglected the first.

by their *own words*; but by the authority of God, *Exod. xx. 1.—17.* And finally, I ask, What reason Mr *Gib* has to suppose, that they ever had *any* respect to *their former words* in their *new covenanting*? He produces none but *one, viz.* “the *covenant-characters* under which they always considered both the Lord and themselves, on these solemn occasions;” which will be examined afterwards.

3. His critical genius is next displayed, in vindicating the *Associate Presbytery's Answers* to Mr *Nairn*, from the misrepresentations of their meaning in the *Preface*, &c.—Mr *Gib* knows very well, what disputes have been agitated among the learned, about the proper idea of *sameness*, or *identity*, (as they call it): and perhaps if the question had ever been moved among them, what is it that denominates a *latter covenant* to be a *RENEWING* of *another*, a *former*, and a *distinct* covenant; where the latter covenant refers to *different times*, *persons*, and *things*, from the former;—where it is made for *quite different circumstances* of the covenanters respectively; and—where the latter covenant is allowed to be a *new, distinct, and separate* covenant from the former? Had this question, I say, come in *this form*, before their tribunal, it might perhaps have puzzled these pedantical gentlemen to give an intelligible answer to it, without offending Mr *Gib*. For my own part, when I found the *Associate Presbytery* had stated the *latter covenants* of our reformers in Scotland, as being every one of them a *new, distinct, and separate deed* by itself,—made for a *present* and particular purpose,—and having a precise meaning as to *times*, *persons*, and *things*, different from all other and former covenants: when I found all this stated by them, I thought, and I still think, that our forefathers did not *renew*, did not *repeat an adherence* in their latter covenants to the *deed* or the *covenant* of their fathers, so as to make that *former deed* the *matter* of their *subsequent* covenant.

4. Mr *Gib* gives another specimen of his talents for criticism, in fixing precisely the idea of *covenant-renewal*.

“What are we to understand by the *renewing* of a covenant?”

“Nothing more can be the real import of the thing than

“this; that, without moving any objection against the ancient

“form of a covenant in its season, and while acknowledging

“breaches of God's law as likewise breaches of that cove-

“nant, there be a solemn avouching, not only of the pri-

“mary obligation which the law of God lays upon us, but

“of a secondary obligation laid on us also by that former

6. 27 “covenant.” [p. 363. 364.]—At present I shall wave his

distinction between a *primary* and a *secondary* obligation.

But I cannot forbear observing the particular and unexampled

description

description he gives of the general nature of *covenanting*; he says, it is “*a solemn avouching of obligations lying, or laid, up-  
“ on us.*” I can easily conceive the propriety of the expressions used in Deut. xxvi. 16.—19.; but the *avouching of obligations* is a new sort of phrase, and for any thing I know may contain some mysterious meaning. However, I except against its currency, because I am not satisfied that Mr Gib has always made a proper use of some received expressions, and therefore dare not authorise him to coin others that are of doubtful signification, and consequently may be more serviceable to his own purposes.—To avouch revealed truth, its doctrines, privileges, and duties, is very intelligible; and to avouch a gracious God, speaking with divine authority in his word, as a sovereign Lawgiver, and a faithful Witness, to be our God, may be easily understood: but what Mr Gib means by a *solemn avouching of obligations*, I know not.—He must mean something or other by the expression; and whatever he mean by it, I affirm that HIS DESCRIPTION OF *covenant-renomination* will either prove, that *all Christian covenants are so many renominations of the covenant Israel made with God?* or it is good for nothing.

5. This gentleman wishes to persuade the world, that, if the *Antiburghers* were to enlarge their confession of sins, and to bring the misconduct of the *Burghers* into the catalogue, yet they would not be obliged to mention the censures they inflicted upon the said *Burghers*, in that confession. [p. 376.] p. 37  
—Mr Gib may consider at his leisure, the advantage his adversaries would derive from so capital an oversight. Let us suppose the *confession* to be continued, as it ought to be, down to the present time;—would not the approbation of the *religious clause* in some *burges oaths*, be mentioned among the standing grounds of the Lord’s controversy?—would not the conduct of the *Burghers* be next mentioned? And—must not the *censures* of the *Antiburgher Synod* then follow in course? They must follow. Having testified against the General Assembly for dismissing the first process against Professor Simson without any censure, and the second process without an adequate censure; surely they could not help telling the world, that they had faithfully delivered the *Burghers unto Satan*: and then their covenanters must necessarily be brought to a solemn test, concerning their views of the morality of this modern fact. It would be utterly inconsistent, to complain of the General Assembly’s neglecting to inflict church-censure, and at the same time to conceal their own zeal in so singular a case.

These are but a few examples of his shining abilities in the



art of criticism. However, they are sufficient to shew that his daring genius is a law to itself; "matters of ordinary forms" in managing an argument, "behoove to yield unto" an extraordinary way of maintaining the cause\* he pleads against the Prefacer. He is nobly superior to all the vulgar rules of logical pedants, and sometimes even of common sense. His extraordinary way of defining and reasoning, must always secure him a triumph, where he thinks it worth the while to contend. The cause is happy, that has such an advocate! such a judge! and such a guardian! all in one person!

ARTICLE 8. Our attention is due, in the next place, to the GRATITUDE of this benevolent gentleman. It is a certain proof of the great degeneracy of the times, that Mr Gib has had so little thanks from the world for all the pains he has taken to be useful in it. But as this sort of treatment is altogether undeserved, and ought to be considered as an effect of envy at his greater merit; so it furnishes him with an occasion of shewing his gratitude in many striking instances, even to his adversaries. History tells us, that one Eratosthratus, an obscure fellow, to get himself a name, set fire to the temple at Ephesus, in the 356th year before the Christian æra: on which account the Ephesians made a law that no one should so much as pronounce his name, under pain of death. But Mr Gib is too generous and noble-minded, to act a part so exceedingly mean and ungrateful, even to a malignant enemy. I shall only mention two or three instances.

1. When three of his elders in 1765, fell under his severe displeasure, for the inclination they discovered to establish a congregation at Leith, Mr Gib set a "mark of his dissatisfaction or displeasure" upon them, only by "nominating them for commissioners" from the Session at Edinburgh, to concur with the petitioners from Leith, in order to their obtaining a disjunction, before their presbytery †.

2. When the petition from Leith was before the Presbytery, Mr Gib, who never wished it to succeed, felt the generous principles of benevolence to the petitioners operate so forcibly, that he was "reduced to a degree of weakness, which he had never before been overtaken with about any business; that of bursting out into a weeping aloud upon the subject," while he was enforcing the petition ‡.

3. When he and his synod are maliciously abused by the Prefacer, and by a correspondent whose invective is adopted by that malignant man; the dove-like, generous spirit of Mr Gib seizes the opportunity to declare, that "they are left to the

\* See Mr Gib's remarks on the *act for a fast*, p. 5. 6.

† *Refuge of Lies, &c.* p. 33.

‡ *Refuge, &c.* p. 32.

"free enjoyment of whatever satisfaction they can find in measures of scurrility and abuse." [p. 357.] And when we review his *Defence*, &c. it will appear *how well* he has kept his word.—He is so far from invading the province of a scurrilous and abusive writer, that he meekly submits without *rendering evil for evil*; or if he is compelled to defend the Secession-cause, he displays his magnanimity and gratitude in every paragraph. Where he dare not speak well of his adversaries, he is sure to interpret every thing they say against him, in the most favourable sense—FOR HIS OWN HONOUR; as a "*strong presumption of his being on the Lord's side*†." But if we sometimes find him using wholesome *severity* against them, we ought to impute all these to an excess of gratitude and benevolence: they have *honoured* him, and this is the *only way* he is able to *recompense* them for all their favours.—This calls upon me to acknowledge Mr Gib's undeserved attention to the writer of the *Preface*, &c. and *Survey*, &c. He owns that this writer has *committed the most malignant abuse upon him*; yet he has assigned the *Prefacer* and *Surveyer* the highest *post of honour* in his disposal, by *gratefully* inserting his remarks upon these infamous pieces, in a work that must live in ages to come. That I may not be outdone in civility, I offer the present *Display of his Defence*, &c. as a public testimony of the impression his kindness has made on the *Prefacer*: and I hereby request Mr Gib and the readers to judge candidly of my opinion concerning the *spirit* of his writings, from this performance.

ARTICLE 9. The last article on this section is approached at last, and I make it heartily welcome, as it brings us within sight of land. It relates to the PERPLEXITY of the *Defender's* mind. By his own confession, he is much more an object of *pity* than of *censure*. He does the best he can to explain and support his cause; but, alas! the times are so miserably bad, he sometimes knows not *what* to say, nor *how* to write. No body can conceive the *feelings* of an author in controversy, when he finds himself shut up by the *stiffness of language*, that refuses to accommodate itself to his ideas; or by the *rigour of clear argument*, which he cannot answer; or by a *watchful adversary*, who is ready to detect and expose the folly and the falsehood of his performance; or, finally, by an *obstinate weakness*, that disposes him to justify *every* thing which relates to himself and his own party, and to censure *every* thing which relates to his adversary and his party.—The embarrassed situation of Mr Gib's mind, in

† *Preface to the Present truth*, p. 6.

writing his *Defence*, &c. may be discerned in very many instances. For example,

1. In the *Preface* to his book, he tells us, "As to what is new of this work, plainness and perspicuity are intended; with such precision of language, as may both consist with, and contribute to these ends. But it is not to be supposed, that any thing can be got so expressed, as to be proof against the arts of misconstruction and wresting; according to that singular impudence of malignity and weakness, which belongs to the present way of writing against the" [Antiburgher] "synod, and the cause among their hands." — This is very distressing indeed!

2. When I had proved, that a public covenant or vow was only to be made in *three cases*, by referring to these places of scripture, which mention all the public vows made by Israel, so far as we know: Mr Gib is at his wit's end; and he only says,—"The gross insult committed upon the scriptures of the Old Testament, by his pretending to find any foundation in them for such doctrines, deserves no particular notice." [p. 361.] A signal of deep distress! He found it impossible to press these scriptures into his service.

3. I had said, that Israel's covenanting is never once called the *renewing of a former covenant*. Here Mr Gib's perplexity is rather too violent. He tells us, that the scriptures are written in "*the ARBITRARY style of language*, and therefore we need not expect precision in their "*WORDS*;" but if we wish to see plainness, perspicuity, and precision of language, concerning the *renewing of former covenants*, we must have recourse to the *contents* of some chapters, prefixed by our translators. [p. 363.]—Why may not some advocates for *Prelacy* as well insist upon the *postscripts to some inspired epistles*, as a precise proof of the divine right of *Diocesan Episcopacy*? especially as these *postscripts* are very ancient, and have been retained by our translators. A drowning man would grasp even at a straw to save his life.

4. I had distinguished between *the Lord's covenanting with men*, and *men's covenanting with God*. Mr Gib is no coward, but, with all his courage, he durst not once look that distinction in the face. He cannot deny it; he cannot confute it; and he dare not apply it.

5. I compared *future covenantings* to the *repeated exercises of faith and love* in the Christian life. Mr Gib finds it convenient to "make" NON- "*sense of this illustration*," by putting "*faith and love*," for THE EXERCISES of *faith and love*: and then he tells me very gravely, "I might have treated the understanding of my readers with more decency, than

"to



"to befool it by such a senseless comparison." [p. 367.]—It is an happiness for some writers, that they get readers after their own heart; for otherwise their works might be like an untimely birth. However, Mr *Gib* is a prudent man. His own perplexity was the only reason why he placed the *Prefacer's* illustration in that false point of view; and therefore I freely forgive him. Any body that reads the paragraph in the *Preface*, &c. will immediately perceive the necessity Mr *Gib* was under, of misrepresenting it, in order to seem to confute it.—Grievous distress!

I am not quite at the middle of his *Defence*, &c. and I have passed over several examples of that gentleman's perplexity in the pages I have run over. The same distress appears throughout, from beginning to end; but I am perfectly tired of collecting instances, where the whole is one complex system of distress and anguish, enough to make its very enemies melt into a generous compassion for the worthy author. I sincerely commiserate his unhappy situation, which is far from being enviable.

N. B. The foregoing *Defence*, &c. is a picture highly finished in Mr *Gib's* TASTE AND STYLE. In displaying the spirit of it, I have been obliged to consider it in different lights; and as a well-drawn picture seems to face to every point from whence it is viewed, I find the spirit of the *Defence*, &c. does the same. Therefore it is not surprising, that some features should have struck mine eye in a very particular manner, on different occasions. I presume, if the reader give as much attention to it as I have done, he will readily agree with me, that the same sentence may often serve to illustrate many of the foregoing articles, without any degree of violence.

## SECTION II. A Display of the PRINCIPLES of Mr GIB'S *Defence of Solemn Covenanting*, &c.

I do not mean to seek advantages against the *Defender*; nor even to improve all the principles against him, that might be collected out of his *Defence*, &c. My intention is to attend to some weighty points, nearly connected with the question in debate; and to shew that several of his leading principles are inconsistent with the simplicity that is toward Christ, and injurious to the truth of the gospel.—This subject requires gravity, attention, and candour; that we may

prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

1. Mr Gib endeavours in his whole first section to persuade us,—That *Christians, in covenanting, should consider themselves in the character of WITNESSES exhibiting a testimony against the course of a rebellious people among whom they live.*—This position ought to be supported with very clear evidence, as it is so widely different from the language used in all these places of Scripture, which give us any information about the nature or design of religious covenanting. Mr Gib has not been so full on this head as could have been wished. He says, (1.) That Israel covenanted “as a people” *“redeemed from the nations and their gods, of whom the*

22. *“Lord said, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.”* [p. 358.]

—But while they are said to be *witnesses, that the Lord is God*, in opposition to all the idols of the nations; I do not find that they are any where said to be properly *witnesses against idol-worshippers*. No doubt the faith, worship, and obedience of the saints, are a testimony against error, idolatry, superstition, and sin; and it is unquestionably the duty of the people of God to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them: but how does this prove, that they should *solemnly swear and vow to the MOST HIGH GOD, to contend and testify against the sins of other people all the days of their life*? It is manifestly incumbent on them, to *contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*, Jude 3.; but this contending is *for the faith*, and not a contending *against every other party*, so as to make their own zeal against others the matter of their solemn covenant.—Their character as *witnesses*, and the duties connected with this character, belong to the church in every condition as long as she is in the world. They are *witnesses that the Lord is God*, when they know and acknowledge him to be the only true God, and their God; “and do worship and glorify him accordingly †.” The word of their testimony is the testimony of Jesus Christ, Rev. xii. 11. 17. The work of Christ’s witnesses is, to *hear the words of his testimony, and to keep those things which are written therein*, Rev. i. 3. to be *faithful unto death, to hold fast his name, and not to deny his faith*, Rev. ii. 10. 13. to *keep his word, and not deny his name, to keep the word of his patience, and hold that fast which they have received, that no man take their crown*, Rev. iii. 8. 10. 11. to *keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus*, Rev. xii. 17.

Further, Mr Gib endeavours to establish his opinion, (2.) By

an argument, to this purpose,—“ When covenanting is in a state of Secession from the corrupt body of a Presbyterian national church, it must regard the corruptions of that body, it must bear a testimony against the same: and the acknowledgment of God, AS A LORD with respect to the covenanters and their interests, must be accompanied with a regarding of him AS A LORD with respect to other beings and interests in the world.” [p. 361.]—In general, it may be observed, that the *Defender* here gives up the last argument, founded on *Is. xliii. 12. Ye are my witnesses, saith THE LORD, that I AM GOD*: for he now says, that covenanting is an “acknowledgment”—of what?—that the Lord is God?—or, that the Lord is God with respect to the covenanters and their interests, and with respect to other beings or interests also?—No; he says, Covenanting is the “acknowledgment of God, AS A LORD.” This alteration of the scripture-language is very material to Mr Gib’s purpose: he will grant that God is A LORD with respect to other beings or interests, besides covenanters and their interests: but we see, in his next section, he positively refuses, that the Lord is A God with respect to these other beings or interests; and he affirms, that the Lord is A God only with respect to the covenanters and their interests.—It is sufficient for our purpose, to reply, that the scripture speaks of the saints as the Lord’s witnesses, THAT HE IS GOD, *Josh. xxii. 34. 1 Kings xviii. 21. 36. 39. Is. xliii. 10. 12. and xlv. 8.*; but unless we allow Mr Gib to reverse their testimony, and make it run thus—THAT GOD IS A LORD, his argument is ruined, so far as it is intended to prove, that religious vows or covenants should exhibit a direct and proper testimony against such as differ from the covenanters and their interests.—So inconsistent are his arguments with one another!

A covenant may be made and entered into by Seceders, that will have a proper respect to the corruptions of the national church;—such a direct respect to these corruptions, as the scripture authorises in all its examples and commands, relative to this work. If we go forth by the footsteps of the flock, in covenanting with the Lord, should not “we avouch him to be our God, and to walk in his ways, &c. and to hearken to his voice?” *Deut. xxvi. 17.* Should not we say, “The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey?” *Josh. xxiv. 24.* Should not “we enter into a covenant to seek the Lord, God of our fathers, with all our heart, and with all our soul?” *2 Chron. xv. 12.* Should not our covenant be made for this precise purpose, “that we should be the Lord’s people?” *2 Chron. xxiii. 16.* Should it



not be "in our heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, *that his fierce anger may turn away from us?*" 2 Chron. xxix. 10. Should we not "make a covenant before the Lord, to *walk after the Lord*, and to *keep his commandments*, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all our heart, and with all our soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in the book of God's law; and to *serve*, even to *serve the Lord our God?*" 2 Chron. xxxiv. 31. 33. Should not we make a covenant "to *put away*" our sins, and to "*do the pleasure of the Lord God of our fathers?*" Ezra. x. 3. 11. Should we not "enter into an oath to *walk in God's law*, and *do all the commandments of the Lord our God*, and his judgments, and his statutes?" Neh. x. 29. Should we not "give OUR OWN SELVES to the Lord?" 2 Cor. viii. 5. Should not we "*vow a vow unto the Lord*, and *perform it?*" Is. xix. 21. Should not covenanters say, *we are the Lord's*, and call themselves by the name of Jacob, and subscribe with their hand unto the Lord, and *sign* themselves by the name of Israel?" Is. xlv. 5. Should not they "*swear, THE LORD LIVETH*, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and *BLESS THEMSELVES IN HIM?*" Jer. iv. 2. Should not they "*JOIN THEMSELVES TO THE LORD?*" Jer. l. 5.—These are the *old paths*, this is the *good way*, wherein covenanters ought to walk, Jer. vi. 16.

These are not all the texts that are usually applied to public covenanting; but they are the principal passages, and they throw as much light on the nature of religious vows as any others in the Bible. Now, I appeal to the understanding, and the conscience of every reader, whether this way of covenanting is not perfectly sufficient for every purpose of Christian vows? And further, whether covenanting in a way of *bearing witness against others in a vow*, is conformable to what these scriptures expressly contain? And finally, whether the *Prefacer's* plan of covenanting, in order to the performance of duties incumbent on the covenanters in some particular situation; in order to fortify themselves against present danger; or to promote a present reformation of themselves; whether this plan of covenanting is in the least different from the whole scope of the scriptures, or from any thing they say on the subject?

II. Another of Mr Gib's principles is,—That "*the LORD's character as the GOD OF ISRAEL, with their character as HIS PEOPLE, always necessarily referred unto, and recognised former covenant-transactions between God and them, as the FORMAL GROUND of these characters; according to the*"

"MUTUAL

"MUTUAL AVOUCHING *which therein took place between God and them.*" [p. 363.]

p. 2

I had said, that the Jewish covenanting is always described as a *transaſſion entirely new*. It is never once called the *renewing of a former covenant*, but is conſtantly ſaid to be a *making*, or an *entering into covenant*, without any recognition of any former covenant. I had quoted the very words wherein the Holy Ghoſt has recorded all their deeds. *Preface on covenanting*, p. 7.—In answer to this argument againſt recogniſing former human deeds of covenanting, in making religious vows, on any future occaſion, Mr Gib blames me, for making "very partial and unfair quotations;" becauſe the covenant they *made or entered into*, is ſometimes called, *the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers*; ſometimes, *a covenant to ſeek the Lord God of their fathers*; ſometimes, *a covenant with the Lord God of Iſrael*; ſometimes, *the covenant of God, the God of their fathers*; ſometimes, *a covenant with our God*; and the LORD with whom they made a covenant, is deſcribed ſometimes, as *the Lord our God*; and ſometimes, as *the Lord, the God of Iſrael*.—If it be aſked, how theſe expreſſions come to be adduced, to prove that Iſrael recogniſed a former covenant? and what argument they contain on this head? He answers, that "the Lord's character as *their God*, and their character as *his people*, always neceſſarily recogniſed former covenant-*transaſſions* between God and them, as the formal ground of ſuch characters; according to the *mutual avouching* which therein took place between God and them."

How widely different is this opinion from the ſimplicity and exactneſs of the oracles of God! Peter ſaid to the Jews, "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of *the covenant which God made with our fathers*, SAYING UNTO ABRAHAM, *And in thy ſeed ſhall all the kindreds of the earth be bleſſed*;" Unto you firſt, God, having raiſed up his ſon Jeſus, ſent him to bleſs you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts iii. 25. 26. To this agrees the account of the matter given by David, Pſal. cv. 8. 9. 10. "He hath remembered *his covenant* for ever, THE WORD WHICH HE COMMANDED FOR A THOUSAND GENERATIONS: *which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Iſaac*; and *confirmed the ſame unto Jacob for a law, and to Iſrael for an everlaſting covenant.*"—Time would fail me to tranſcribe all that expreſs and deciſive evidence the Bible contains on this point, to confute Mr Gib's notion, viz. That *mutual avouchings*, in ſolemn covenants of duties, were the formal ground of the LORD's character as *the God of Iſrael*, and of Iſrael's character as *the people of God*. On the contrary, it is

as clear as noon-day, that these characters are *only* founded in the *gracious revelation* God made to Abraham, and confirmed to Israel for an everlasting covenant. We have an abstract of that revelation, in Gen. xvii. 7. 8. "I will make my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee; in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee: and I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."—Circumcision was appointed to be the *seal* of these covenant-characters; which proves against Mr Gib, that they were not founded in solemn covenants of duties, Gal. iii. 16. 17. 18.

I am truly surprised to hear a Calvinist affirm, that *mutual avouchings* in solemn-covenanting with God, are the *FORMAL GROUND* of the Lord's character as *our God*, and of our character as *his people*! The consequences of this position are many and serious.—I shall only mention three. (1.) If this were the case, then *all* the people of God *must* be solemn covenanters; and such as are not solemn covenanters could not be his people! (2.) If this were so, then a covenant-relation between God and his people would be established by some *other* means than a *belief* of the truth of the gospel! And (3.) Such a covenant-relation could not be founded upon the covenant God made with Abraham; because this covenant, and all its privileges, were given to Abraham by *promise*, Gal. iii. whereas solemn covenants are expressly called *covenants of duties*, by the Associate Presbytery; as they unquestionably are.

III. A third principle maintained by Mr Gib is,—That "a being under the obligation of our solemn covenants," means "a being parties covenanting IN THE LOINS OF OUR FATHERS." [p. 369.] "This," says he, "is certainly the only sense of covenant-obligation, that ever entered into any mind till now." Accordingly he makes our case parallel to the case of Israel, Deut. xxix. 14. 15. 24. 25.—I do not complain of this as a very capital error; but the following observations deserve some regard. (1.) The Jewish covenants did not bind the *Heathens* that lived among the Jews, in the same sense as they bound the Jews who covenanted; and no more could our solemn covenants bind *malignants*, in the same manner as they bound the covenanters. (2.) Many things concurred to preserve a distinction between the Jews and the Heathens, so as the Jews might always remain a *separate people*; and as many things have conspired to blend the posterity of such as swore our solemn covenants, with the posterity of those who did not swear them. (3.) Providence has sufficiently confuted Mr Gib's idea of covenant-obligation, by



by leaving nine parts out of ten, among the inhabitants of Great Britain, under an irremediable incapacity of coming at any certainty, even after the most careful and anxious inquiry,—that they *ever* were IN THE LOINS of such parents as swore our solemn covenants. If Mr Gib is so happy as to have a sufficient proof, that he was *in the loins* of covenanting ancestors; he should consider, that this is not so easily known to many others, who cannot ascertain the same sort of connection by any kind of evidence whatever. (4.) It is certain enough, that the greatest part, even of the people in Scotland, did not swear our solemn covenants. In some places of the country, no doubt the far greater part swore them; but take the whole nation, and all its inhabitants complexly, the covenanters, in all the periods of covenanting, were by far the smallest number. *Persons of all ranks* indeed took these covenants; but that is no proof, that *all* persons of *all* ranks engaged in them. Perhaps some will suppose, that the covenanters *represented the whole nation* in that exercise; and that the whole nation ought to be considered as concurring in their deed, *virtually*, though not explicitly. But even this supposition will not help Mr Gib: for he speaks of *our* being under the obligation of our solemn covenants, only as *parties covenanting IN THE LOINS OF OUR FATHERS*; where he allows, that these covenants inferred an obligation upon the *covenanters themselves*, and upon *their posterity as parties covenanting in their loins*. This notion of covenant-obligation necessarily limits it to the *lineal descendants* of such as *actually* covenanted. When the Antiburghers argue, for an universal obligation of our solemn covenants upon the generation in this “*only sense*,” from Deut. xxix. 14. 15.; they do not consider, that *all Israel*, in distinction from the *Heathens* who lived among them, were a *separated and an holy nation*; and that the *Heathens* who lived among *Israel*, were not concerned in “the mutual avouchings between God and his own people” consequently; these *Heathens* were not, and the children in their loins could not be, under the obligation of Jewish deeds of covenanting, in Mr Gib’s sense of covenant obligation. This will prove too, that all *malignants*, and all who did *not* concur in taking our solemn covenants in these lands, together with *all the posterity in their loins*, are *not* under the obligation of these covenants, in Mr Gib’s sense. (5.) It may now be asked, *Who are under the obligation of our solemn covenants in Mr Gib’s sense?* The authentic and public *histories* and *records* of the kingdom will be of very little service here, except to a few families. Even *tradition* itself cannot be of general use. An *impious scepticism* on this point must hence-  
forth

forth possess the minds of such as receive Mr Gib's definition of covenant-obligation.—When I wrote the *Preface on covenanting*, I knew that his definition had been inconsiderately adopted by some persons of eminent worth, whose fame is in the churches; I endeavoured to weigh it without prejudice, and found it wanting; whereupon I dismissed it, and exhibited (for it is not my own invention) another idea of covenant-obligation, much more *extensive*, more *scriptural*, more *rational*, and more *influencing upon a religious conversation*. As it stands quoted in Mr Gib's *Defence*, &c. [p. 368, 369.] I am excused the trouble of transcribing it. His impotent attack upon it, which is continued to the end of the second section of his *Defence*, &c. is reserved for my next section.

IV. I had said in the *Preface* &c. that “the nature of sins lies *wholly* in their being transgressions of the law of God.” Mr Gib turns short upon me for maintaining such an opinion,—“But GUILT CERTAINLY BELONGS TO THE NATURE OF SIN,” says he; “and so, this must lie *wholly* in being a transgression of the law of God!” [p. 370.] He tells me, that “*primarily* in the place of *wholly*, would have saved the sense; but must have destroyed my argument.”—The credit of my argument is a small matter in Mr Gib's eyes; but I hope he values the honour of the Scriptures. Now, if we make the experiment Mr Gib has hinted, the sentence will stand thus—“The nature of sins lies *primarily* in their being transgressions of the law of God!”—If that gentleman thinks this position is good sense, I am sure it is *false doctrine*; but this doctrine, however false, and however injurious to the revealed will of God, must either be retained, or, else Mr Gib's favourite principle about *secondary obligations* must be renounced.

If Mr Gib acquiesce in David's confession of sin, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*; or, in John's description of it, *sin is the transgression of the law*; or, in Paul's declaration, *Where no law is, there is no transgression*; or even in the Westminster Assembly's definition of sin, as being, *Any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God*:—if he acquiesce in these authorities, he must expel that favourite intruder [PRIMARILY,] from any sort of consideration in viewing the nature of sin, which lies—not *primarily*—but *wholly* in its being a *transgression of the law of God*. But then his *Defence* &c. must be deleted, and left to shift for itself.

What must an intelligent reader think of Mr Gib's opinion concerning *guilt*, expressed in these words,—“GUILT CERTAINLY BELONGS TO THE NATURE OF SIN!”—Had

Mr Wesley, or some of his stamp, expressed themselves in such terms, I would not have been surpris'd; but to find Mr Gib speak in such language, is a further proof how far a man will go against his own principles, in order to reach a blow to his adversaries. *Guilt is an obligation to punishment, ON ACCOUNT OF SIN*; and therefore it does not enter into the idea of the NATURE OF SIN at all. Does not the nature of sin remain in believers, and yet they are not guilty or condemned in the sight of God?

V. He affirms, that "Any mistakes or mismanagements in the work of reformation in Scotland, preceding the year 1651, cannot be properly ranked among the standing grounds of the Lord's controversy with their posterity; nor any other evils, but those which belong to the succeeding course of apostacy from that reformation." [p. 372.]

p. 34

All the evils between 1638 and 1650, are here palliated under smooth terms; they are only called "*mistakes or mismanagements.*" These worthies, whose zeal deserves, in many things, the approbation and imitation of ages to come, had very different views of their own managements in that work of reformation. They candidly acknowledged their sin unto the Lord, and did not hide their iniquity under soft and gentle words; as the *acknowledgment of sins* they used in 1648, will bear witness.—Moreover, does not Mr Gib allow in another place, that these mistakes or mismanagements were *one spring of the downfall of a covenanted reformation?*—Further I ask, whether he will venture to say, that the good intentions of our reformers cancelled all former grounds of the Lord's controversy with posterity? Did their humiliations expiate all former evils? Did the church and state of Scotland in 1650 stand clear of all the grounds of the dreadful controversy the Lord was then beginning to plead with them, and continued to plead till the revolution?

Mr Gib may now review his own position; and then tell us, who is for antiquating the standing grounds of the Lord's controversy. He may peruse the last four paragraphs of his own third section, which are worthy of his notice in a double view: (1.) As they relate to facts and evils before 1650; and (2.) As these paragraphs may relate to evils since 1743, particularly among his own party.

N. B. All the evils which Mr Gib and his friends engage to contend and testify against in their covenant, as standing grounds of the Lord's controversy with them and the generation, happened between 1650 and 1743!!! None of them before 1650; and none since 1743.!!!

QUEST. Whether should we wonder most at the sagacity



ty of the *Associate Presbytery*, which could frame a *bond* and an *acknowledgment of sins* in the year 1743, that would suit all the circumstances of the Secession in *Scotland, England, Ireland, and America*, for upwards of thirty years to come, without any alteration;—or at the *FOLLY* of the *Antiburghers*, who, contrary to the opinion of *that Presbytery* in their *Answer* to Mr. *Nairn*, obstinately persist in using the same *bond* and the same *acknowledgment of sins* all along, that was only intended for the Secession in 1743?

### SECTION III. *A Display of the FALLACY of Mr GIB's Defence of Solemn Covenanting, &c.*

THE argumentative part of Mr *Gib's Defence &c.* is not so large as I could have wished. There is a vast odds between *writing* and *reasoning* on a subject. However, it is my business to consider what the *Defender* has offered,—not to direct him what he should have said. It shall be my study to do him justice, by fairly stating the sense of his arguments; and to vindicate what I apprehend to be truth, by making a candid reply.

1. Near the beginning of his first section he says,—“People can never apprehend any such duties, as are presently incumbent in virtue of certain providential circumstances,—duties that had no foundation before these circumstances, nor will have any after them.”—*Ans.* If by *foundation* is meant a *divine obligation* to perform these duties in proper circumstances, the *Prefacer* agrees with the *Defender*; but the *Defender* must know, that the duties of husband and wife are presently incumbent on them, only in virtue of their providential circumstances; and that a man and woman are only bound respectively to perform conjugal duties, while they are married, and neither before marriage, nor after the death of one of the parties. The cases of the *Macedonians*, 2 Cor. viii. 5. and of the *Jews*, in the time of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, are examples of people covenanting to perform some duties, that could only agree to such providential calls as they then had, and could only be matters of duty in such circumstances as they were in.

2. Mr *Gib* is much offended with the *Prefacer* for affirming, that scriptural covenanting was never reckoned either necessary or seasonable, except in extraordinary circumstances; and that these extraordinary circumstances were evident to all concerned, and generally acknowledged to be a sufficient call to make a covenant concerning them.—Mr *Gib* supposes

this

this doctrine will supersede covenanting-work altogether; because it can never be expected, that all who are reckoned the people of God will be unanimous in approving of that measure in any case. [p. 359.]—*Ans.* Every impartial reader p. 29. will see, that I speak of the *general sense* of them that fear God, and not of the opinion of every individual. Did not the Jews always perceive the calls they had to covenanting-work? Was not this the case too with the Macedonians? And must not this always be the principle upon which Christians will *freely offer themselves* to join in a public oath, vow, or covenant?

3. Mr Gib collects “the genuine amount of the Prefacer’s” misty doctrine as to public covenanting.—It is even this: “That any number of people, in their solemn covenanting, must have no regard but to their own intrinsic concerns; they must keep as much within themselves, as any independent congregation in their ordinary and private church-covenant.” [p. 361.]—*Ans.* Covenanting is a work of such a nature, that it is entirely confined to the *intrinsic concerns* of the covenanters: or, in other words, People who make a covenant with the Lord in a solemn vow, only *give THEIR OWN SELVES to the Lord*, that *they should be his people*. If this is what Mr Gib means, by “their own intrinsic concerns,” and “keeping within themselves,” in their solemn and public vowing to the Most High God; then I affirm, that people are neither warranted by the word of God, nor by common sense, to have a regard to any *other* concerns but their own. *Independents* have such a respect to their intrinsic concerns in their church-covenants; and so have consistent *Presbyterians* in their most public vows. But how would this gentleman with his covenanters to *regard the concerns of others*? Only by *witnessing, contending, and testifying AGAINST THEM!*—A very curious and singular way of *MINGLING their own interests with the concerns of others!*—Perhaps Mr Gib will say, they ought not to *minge their own interests with the concerns of others*: be it so; then they ought to “*keep within themselves*,” or, to “*regard their own intrinsic and separate concerns*.”

4. Mr Gib affirms, that where-ever the Lord is represented, as *the God of Israel*, or, *the God of their fathers*; and where-ever they are considered as *his people*;—FORMER COVENANT-TRANSACTIONS between God and them, in a way of solemn covenanting, are ALWAYS necessarily referred to, and recognised, as the FORMAL GROUND OF THESE CHARACTERS [p. 361.]—p. 26. A more extraordinary declaration than this never came from the pen of a *Protestant*, who professed any veneration for the scriptures as the *ONLY RULE of his faith and practice*. But it

is mere assertion, without any foundation in the word of God I hope *he erred, not knowing the scriptures*: I am very unwilling to suppose he would choose to wrest them, in order to support an untenable cause. To demonstrate the falsehood of his doctrine, I must observe, (1.) That the Antiburghers have hitherto acknowledged, there were *no transactions* between God and Israel in a *covenant of duties*, till Israel stood before the Lord in Horeb. Deut. v. 2. 3. "The Lord our God made a covenant *with us* in Horeb. The Lord made *not this covenant with our fathers*, but *WITH US, even WITH US, WHO ARE ALL OF US HERE ALIVE THIS DAY.*" (2.) The Lord avouched Israel to be *his people*, and *his son*, yea, *his first born*, BEFORE these transactions at Horeb and in the land of Moab; and declared himself to be *their God*, and *the God of their fathers*, BEFORE he brought them out of the land of Egypt. There are more than a dozen of such declarations recorded in the third, fourth, and following chapters of *Exodus*.—And these declarations were believed and confessed by Israel, as we read in these same chapters, and particularly in Exod. xv. 2. "The Lord is *my God*, and I will prepare him an habitation; *my father's God*, and I will exalt *him.*" This was their song *before they came to Horeb*. (3.) It is certain these are *covenant-characters*; but it is certain also, that *the covenant of grace*, or *the promise of God*, is the *FORMAL GROUND OF THEM*. (4.) There is no way of evading this convincing proof of Mr Gib's dangerous mistake, but by adopting another still worse; namely, that *the covenant God made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob*, Exod. ii. 24. was a *covenant of duty*. Time only can discover, whether Mr Gib will venture to take up this ground; but he may be sure, it will be warmly disputed by the true friends of the gospel.—Much more might be said against his pernicious doctrine, but I must proceed to another article.

5. He says, "Nothing more can be the real import of *renewing a covenant* but this; that, without moving any objection against the ancient form of a covenant in its *season*, and while acknowledging breaches of God's law, as *likewise breaches of that covenant*, there be a solemn avouching, not only of the primary obligation which the law of God lays upon us, but of a secondary obligation *laid on us also by that former covenant.*"—*Ans.* I have already excepted against his *phrase*, and his *idea of renewing a covenant*;—against his expression, *the avouching of obligations*; and—against his distinction between *primary and secondary obligations*: and I shall now try to convince the reader, that Mr Gib's notion of renewing a covenant will



will prove, (so far as it proves any thing), that the Seceding bond is, and may be considered, as a renewing of Israel's covenant at Horeb!! (1.) Seceding covenanters do *not move any objections against the ancient form of that covenant at Horeb in its season*, any more than against the ancient form of our covenants, both national and the solemn league, in their seasons. (2.) Seceding covenanters may *acknowledge breaches of God's law, as likewise breaches of that covenant*, which Israel made at Horeb, as well as breaches of the national covenant, and the solemn league. (3.) Seceding covenanters may be as properly said to *avouch solemnly, not only the primary obligation which the law of God lays upon them, but a secondary obligation laid on them also by that covenant at Horeb*, as well as by the national covenant and the solemn league. The secondary obligation laid on *them* by the covenant of Israel at Horeb, is every way as strong, as the obligation laid on them by our solemn covenants.

I insinuated this idea in the *Preface*, &c.; and I shall now confirm it, by presenting to the reader a sensible passage from Mr Gib's sermon on Neh. ix. 38. which is printed in the same *Appendix* with his *Defence*, &c.—“That the *examples* of covenanting under the Old Testament are for our imitation, appears from the special *unity* of the Old and New Testament church. These are not properly two different churches as to their nature, but *all one church*; brought through infancy and non-age to a state of maturity, under a more full and clear dispensation of grace. According to the ancient prophecy and promise; *Japheth* (the posterity of Japheth in the Gentile European nations, the isles of the Gentiles) is brought to  *dwell in the tents of Shem*; of the Jewish church, who descended from *Shem*: The Gentiles are brought to dwell in the same tents, in the same church-state, with the same privileges, under a new and more glorious administration. Seeing therefore the *Jewish* and *Christian* churches, though they be *two as to their form*, are but *one church as to their nature*; it plainly follows, that approved examples under the Old Testament, as to those things which are of a moral nature, can not be antiquated under the New Testament.” [p. 350. 351.]—I heartily adopt this doctrine; and infer from it, that all Christian vows, according to Mr Gib's notion of *renewing a covenant*, must be so many renovations of the covenant at Horeb! They may be called so, with as great propriety as the Seceding bond can be called, a renewing of our solemn covenants. The Christian church was spiritually in Abraham's loins, Gal. iii. 14. 29.

I presume it will not be pretended, after what has been said in the last section, that our obligation by religious vows made in the days of our fathers, is founded upon our being in the loins of actual covenanters: it must necessarily refer to our being *professors of the same faith and obedience* with them; Eph. ii. 19. 20.; and consequently, we must be under the obligation of all the vows made by the *one church of Christ*. Now, if this be our real situation, there must be as much propriety in Seceders acknowledging the secondary obligation of all *Jewish vows*, as there can be in solemnly avouching the secondary obligation of our *national covenants*; because we were, in a SPIRITUAL SENSE, in the loins of Israel, as well as in the loins of such actual covenanters, as swore the national covenant and solemn league: but if we consider the import of being in the loins of covenanting progenitors in a NATURAL SENSE, Mr Gib does not know how few, or how many, of his witnessing covenanters are lineally descended from such parents as actually took our solemn covenants. Upon the whole I beg leave to ask,

*First*, If that secondary obligation lies only in *natural* and *lineal descent* from covenanting ancestors, in whose loins children were *parties covenanting*;—ought not every one who pretends to renew a covenant, by solemnly avouching a secondary obligation laid on him by that covenant which he renews,—to be well assured, that such an obligation really lies on him? Would not a doubt concerning this matter, render his profession and renovation an act of horrid presumption? Is one out of twenty among the Antiburgher-covenanters, able to satisfy himself, that he was a *party covenanting* with God, in the loins of his *natural* parents; and that he is *thereby* under a secondary obligation? If he was not in the loins of covenanting parents, does he not mock God, by pretending to renew a covenant, and to avouch a secondary obligation he was never under?—But,

*Secondly*, If that secondary obligation lies in our being in the loins of our fathers as *covenanting parties*, in a *spiritual sense*; that is, if a secondary obligation is laid on us, by our professing the *same faith and obedience* which the saints professed, by a solemn covenant, in ages past: I ask,—Whether such an obligation does not lie in the *Jewish covenants* at Horeb, &c. as much as in our *solemn covenants*? and whether the secondary obligation of *all* the Jewish covenants ought not to be avouched as really and explicitly by Seceding covenanters, as the secondary obligation of our solemn covenants themselves?—Or,

*Thirdly*, If both these schemes are clogged with unturmountable

firmountable objections and difficulties;—ought we not to confine our ideas of covenanting to the scripture-plate? Should we not rest in this view of every religious vow or covenant, viz. That it is a *new, entire, and complete transaction*? This sets aside every objection, and removes every difficulty, upon the safest and the surest principles. Hereby we should be led directly to the word of God itself, when we make a covenant; and by managing the duty in this plain and simple method, we would go forth by the footsteps of the flock.—Such *covenant-renovation* as Mr Gib contends for, is not warranted by the word of God, and is not once exemplified in the sacred records of the church.

6. Mr Gib, having denied that the nature of sin lies *wholly* in its being a transgression of the law of God, is self-consistent when he affirms, that there is a *twofold obligation* lying upon covenanters; “a *primary* obligation which the law of God lays upon them, and a *secondary* obligation laid on them also by that former covenant, as a *superadded obligation to duties*.” [p. 363. 364.] “The obligation of oaths is *subordinate unto*, and *founded in the law of God*, so that a breach of these is *primarily* a breach of that law.” [p. 370.] —“Why should any oath be administered in any case, or why should any swearer make any account of his oath in any case, or how can others have any dependence on a man’s oath in any case,—if no *NEW OBLIGATION* arises from oaths!—The law of God binds men; and this is *one* obligation, the *PRIMARY* obligation upon their consciences. But men also bind themselves by oaths; particularly by solemn vows of conformity to that law: and is not this *another* obligation, an *ADDITIONAL* obligation, though *SUBORDINATE*?” [p. 371.]

That we may perceive the *fallacy* of this reasoning, it is necessary to offer a few remarks to the reader’s consideration. (1.) These assertions are intended to confute an opinion I hold to be very sacred; to wit, “that no human oath concerning divine truth and moral duty, can add any *obligation* to that which arises from the law of God.”—If I believe, that the nature of sin consists *only* in its being any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God; and if I am persuaded, that a person *only* committeth sin, so far as he transgresseth the law of God, 1 John 3. 4; then I must also maintain, that *all obligation* to believe and obey the revealed will of God, is inherent in the divine law; though the *motives* to that faith and obedience may arise from other considerations besides divine authority. (2.) This point is set in a very clear and satisfying light, by attending



to the nature and purposes of all religious vows in the Christian life. They are an *homage to the holy One of Israel*; they are a *solemn mode of professing our faith and obedience*; and they are themselves only so many *services expressly prescribed in the law of God*. The design of this duty is not to constitute a new obligation, or, (which is the same thing), A NEW LAW, in cases wherein the law of God has already determined for us; but the end and purpose of this solemn work is, to testify our faith, and the sense we have, and wish to maintain, of the *one* obligation of the law of the Lord our God and Redeemer; and to excite our attention to the revealed will of God, as the only rule of our belief and duty. This view of religious covenanting is so manifestly agreeable to the whole current of the scriptures on the head, that I need only refer to the *reproofs* of God to Israel, and their *confessions* unto God, which Mr Gib has quoted in his second section, for a sufficient proof of it. (3.) Solemn deeds of covenanting do not constitute a *covenant-relation* between God and the covenanters, (as Mr Gib supposes); even as subjects swearing allegiance and fealty to their sovereign, doth not constitute a political relation between them and him: and if such covenanting doth not constitute a relation which did not exist before, it cannot possibly establish another, a new obligation. (4.) I believe there is a *primary obligation* IN THE LAW OF GOD, both concerning the making, and the performing of vows, and covenants, and oaths. (5.) What does Mr Gib mean by a *secondary*, a *subordinate*, and a *superadded* obligation laid on us, by DEEDS OF MEN, altogether distinct from the obligation laid on us by THE LAW OF GOD? Is this obligation *divine*, *eternal*, and *indispensible*? Does it run *parallel* to that which is laid on us by the law of God, and yet always *distinct* from it? Doth the duty which God requireth of man, include any thing more than *obedience to his revealed will*? Does not Mr Gib speak both *unscripturally*, and *unworthily*, of the obligation of covenants, oaths, and vows, when he calls it only a *secondary* and a *subordinate* obligation?—The doctrine of the prophane Prefacer is more pious on this point than that of Mr Gib himself!

7. The reader must indulge me the liberty of quoting a passage from the *Preface on covenanting*, in these words:—  
 “All the Jewish covenants must have been the same in substance. But there was no repetition of any former covenant when they made a new one; nor did they ever directly or indirectly intimate, that they referred to any former covenant their fathers had made, when they covenanted for themselves, on any occasion whatever. The case may be illustrated by a familiar example:—When Christians live

“ by faith, or walk in love, they are often repeating the *same*  
 “ exercises of mind, and performing over again the *same*  
 “ duties; yet no man, who understands the gospel-scheme,  
 “ would call their repeated exercise of faith, a *renovation of*  
 “ *their former exercise of it*; or their repeated acts of love,  
 “ a *renewing of their former acts of it*. In the continued  
 “ living by faith, and walking in love, a Christian should fix  
 “ his whole attention, not on what he has attained to, but  
 “ on the *faithful word, and sovereign authority of Jehovah*.  
 “ The very same was the case of the *Jews*, who entered into  
 “ covenant with God; and the same should be the case with  
 “ *Christians* too, in their covenanting, according to that ex-  
 “ press directory, Rev. iii. 2. *Remember how thou hast recei-*  
 “ *ved, and heard, and hold fast, and repent.*” — Mr Gib ani-  
 “ madverts on this passage to this effect: — “ It may well be  
 “ reckoned very odd, to state a comparison betwixt *perma-*  
 “ *nent deeds* in the church, and *transient acts* in the mind;  
 “ as if there could be any sense in arguing from the one to  
 “ the other.” — “ Will the *Prefacer's* gospel-scheme allow  
 “ him to say, about a new act of faith and love, (as he ar-  
 “ gues about new covenanting), that it contains no approba-  
 “ tion of, no adherence to any former attainment or engage-  
 “ ment in this matter!” [p. 367.]

p. 29.

Remarks. (1.) Mr Gib here distinguishes acts of covenant-  
 making, as *permanent deeds of the church*, from *living by faith*,  
 and *walking in love*, as *transient acts of the mind*. (2.) He does  
 not deny in so many words, that *faith and love*, in all their ex-  
 ercises, refer *directly* to the *word and authority of God*. Yet,  
 (3.) He supposes, that a *new act of faith and love* contains *no*  
*approbation of, and an adherence to former attainments or en-*  
*agements in this matter*. Perhaps Mr Gib understands the  
 gospel-scheme, which he speaks of with an indecent levity; but  
 this sentiment is no proof that he does. He should consider,  
 that *faith* is not an approbation of former attainments; but  
 the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*:  
 Heb. ii. 1. Thereby a sinner *sees* neither his former attain-  
 ments, nor his former engagements, — but the *promises* and  
 declarations of a faithful God. Heb. ii. 1. 3. But, (4.) I can-  
 not imagine what he means, by considering acts of covenant-  
 making as *permanent deeds in the church*, in opposition to *li-*  
*ving by faith, and walking in love, as transient acts in the mind*.  
 Is not the deed of covenanting, in the principal view of it †,

an

† “ The language of the believing soul, in entering into covenant with  
 “ God, is, *Let me be no more mine own, but the Lord's; I make a surrender of*  
 “ *myself and mine all to him.* — And as the several duties in the bond come to be  
 “ mentioned,

*an act of the mind?* Is it not also a *transient act*? Can there be any *right covenanting*, but what is performed in the exercise of faith and love? Ought not every temper, and every external action of covenanters, when they go about that work in the church, to be entirely *influenced and governed* by faith and love? And should not their faith and love be as *single* fixed upon the word of God in the *deed of covenant-making*, as in the *general course of their life and walk*?—As Mr Gib detests all *pedantry*, the reader may believe—if he pleases—that Mr Gib's genius soared very high, when he was obliged to use these cramp words [*permanent deeds and transient acts*]; and that his answer is very learned, because it is very hard to be understood by some of his admirers; and particularly by the *Prefacer*, who has often tried to conceive AN ACT OF DEED OF COVENANTING, under the notion of a PERMANENT OR *lasting* DEED, but he is never able to follow Mr Gib's idea. Sometimes I have thought he meant *permanent obligations*; but when I attempted to weigh his argument in that view, it was *nonsense*. Therefore I must leave the explication of the phrase to himself, who can best tell us, what he intends by renewing PERMANENT DEEDS in opposition to *transient acts*. To my apprehension they have every appearance of self-contradiction; as they seem to signify such *deeds* as are still *doing*, but are *never finished acts*!—Unless this be his meaning, there is no sense in his distinction, as it is here applied; and if this be his meaning, it may be doubted, whether he understood what he wrote.

8. Mr Gib says, "The *Prefacer's* finishing stroke to covenant-  
 "renovation, lies in a vile reproach cast upon it; as if, in op-  
 "position to a being *led directly to the word of God itself*, men  
 "did thereby *make the appearances their fathers made for re-*  
 "ligion, the ground-work of their own covenanting."—Upon  
 "this Mr Gib smartly asks,—“But is there no difference be-  
 "tween a *pattern* and a *ground-work*? or, doth a regard to  
 "former vows lie off the road to God's word? or, must a  
 "going forth by the footsteps of the flock, be now reckoned  
 "inconsistent with a going directly to the word of God it-  
 "self? [p. 367, 368]

"mentioned, you are to EXERCISE AN ENTIRE REGARD TO THE SOVE-  
 "REIGN AUTHORITY OF GOD, requiring that piece of service from you; your  
 "hearts are to go out in ARDENT LOVE TO THE LAW OF GOD, as carrying a  
 "stamp of divinity on it.—The duty thus consists in THE EXERCISE OF THE  
 "SEVERAL GRACES OF THE SPIRIT, conformable to what is sworn unto.—  
 "You are thus to pay the INTERNAL HOMAGE OF THE HEART UNTO HIM,  
 "as your sovereign Lord." Mr Morrison's Sermons on Psal. lxxvi. 11. p. 144.  
 145. recommended by Mr Gib.

Remarks.



Remarks. (1.) Mr *Gib* is as much a politician as an honest man, when he insinuates, that his idea of renewing covenants, amounts to no more than the *imitation* of a *pattern* in a former covenant. But if he agree to stand on this ground, the *Prefacer* has no objection to his opinion. (2.) Such a regard to former covenants as he pleads for, in the renovation of them, *MUST*, (to use his odd phrase), *lie off the road to God's word*; because he insists, that the matter of a new covenant must be viewed, not *merely* as it relates to the *word of God*, but, as it has a *secondary* and *subordinate* relation *also* to a *former covenant*. Such covenant-renovation leads to the *deeds of men* in covenanting, as well as to the *word of God*. (3.) These that renew covenants in Mr *Gib's* sense, do not *go forth by the footsteps of the flock*; because it has been proved, that the people of God always *made*, or *entered into* a *new covenant*.

9. Mr *Gib* says further on this head,—“The *Prefacer* will not refuse, that he once solemnly vowed an adherence to some subordinate standards of religion, which were framed and avouched in the days of our fathers. But did he then take these standards for the ground-work of his religion? or, did he not take them for a proper guide, as leading him directly to the word of God itself, for the ground-work of his religion?—These cases are quite parallel as to the present argument.” [p. 368.]—In answer to this I must observe, (1.) That I firmly believe not only the usefulness, but the *necessity* of confessions of faith: and though I have not seen Mr *Gib's* Second Volume, wherein he threatens to prove, that my scheme strikes at the root of all engagement to such confessions; I may assure the reader, the proof will be of a piece with that which demonstrates the warrantableness of *delivering the Burghers unto Satan*. (2.) Mr *Gib* should not suppose, that I solemnly vowed an adherence to any *subordinate* standards, as distinct from the scriptures. I do not consider *confessions of faith, creeds, and articles*, as *SUBORDINATE STANDARDS* of faith and duty; but as an *exhibition of the revealed will of God*. (3.) I do not view them as a *guide to the word of God*; but as a *declaration* of faith and duty, whereby people testify in what sense they understand the scriptures, and may be assisted in the improvement of the word of God. (4.) It is amazing, after what has been said by Mr *Ralph Erskine* and others, with so much evidence and force of argument to the contrary, that Mr *Gib* will make *our covenants* and the *confession of faith* to be the same thing; and an adherence to the one to be of the same kind with an adherence to the other. Yet, (5.) If he will insist on so ridiculous a notion, and will maintain, that an adherence to former

covenants is a parallel case to an adherence to tests of orthodoxy, his plea for covenant-renewal is for ever ruined. No man is called to adhere *primarily* to the word of God, and *secondarily* to these standards. He is only called to confess his faith concerning the *meaning* of the word of God, as explained in these standards; but is never taught, to view his approbation of them as a *secondary* obligation, nor to consider them as a *system* that is any way distinct from the scriptures.

10. He says,—“If every new covenanting among the Jews did not import a renewing of ALL former covenants, must have imported a *perfidious renouncing of all the covenant-obligation* which they had been formerly brought  
p. 31. “it under, in the loins of their fathers.” [p. 369.]—

I suppose Seceding covenanters must do the same! They must either renew ALL former covenants they were brought under since the fall of Adam, in the loins of their fathers; or else perfidiously renounce ALL these covenant-obligations!!!

11. I had said in the *Preface*, &c.—“The Burghers acquiesce in the approbation of that system which our forefathers engaged by oath to believe and observe. That system they believe to be the system of faith, concerning doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, (to be observed by divine appointment in the Christian church), which was once delivered unto the saints. They believe it to be divine in its original, and in its authority upon the conscience. They are persuaded, that no human oath can add any obligation to that which arises from the law of God: and yet they believe, that if we either omit the duties explicitly engaged to by our forefathers, whose transactions are known to us; or commit the sins they engaged to put away; in either of these cases, even *our sins*, in these matters, must have an higher aggravation of guilt and criminality. The nature of such sins of omission and commission, lies *wholly* in their being transgressions of the law of God; but the aggravations of such sins arise from their being done against these measures of light and conviction, concerning known and acknowledged sin and duty, which render the transgressor of the law of God a self-condemned criminal. In this sense the Burghers steadfastly maintain the obligation of our solemn covenants.”—

p. 31. Mr Gib quotes this passage in his *Defence*, &c. [p. 368, 369.] and says many severe things against the *Author* of it, and against the *misty doctrine* it contains. There is nothing in his animadversions that merits any notice, besides what has been occasionally touched already, except the following interrogations,

terrogations;—"What sort of relation has all this to our solemn covenants, other than to the case of any covenants in the Jewish church, or to the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, or to the case of the angels who kept not their first estate, or to a thousand other things, from which we may, in the same MANNER, derive measures of light and conviction about sin and duty? And is this the highest and noblest sense of covenant-obligation,—this arrant nonsense, so impudently palmed upon the world?" [p. 371. 372.]

Remarks. (1.) I do not think Seceding covenant-renovation should have any more respect to our solemn covenants, than to the Jewish covenants; and if Mr Gib still reckons our solemn covenants only a pattern, and not a ground-work, of our covenant renovation, he must be of the same opinion.

(2.) Mr Gib will exceedingly oblige the world, if he will please to tell us, *when*, and *how*, Sodom and Gomorrah covenanted for a religious purpose †; and especially if he will gratify us, with an extract of the religious covenant made by the angels who kept not their first estate. These things will be such an acquisition to the learned world, that to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing them clearly stated, I consent to excuse him the trouble of collecting the *thousand other things* with respect to religious vows, which he has in his eye no doubt, and can produce upon a proper call.

(3.) It is most certain, there is "arrant nonsense impudently palmed upon the world," in the dispute between Mr Gib and me; but it is scarce decent for the disputants to prevent the opinion of the audience. It is enough for him and me, that we are both of one mind as to the general doctrine; the world must make the application.

12. I am glad to hear from Mr Gib's pen, that the Anti-burgher "Synod pretends to no perfection in the management of the work among their hands." [p. 376.] However, it would seem they are of opinion, that their form of covenanting is so near perfection, (though it does not quite reach the point, that they cannot in the least improve upon it: for he tells us, "The present form of covenanting in Scotland, as used by the Anti-burghers, is precisely the same, without the smallest addition or alteration, that was agreed upon by the Associate Presbytery in 1743."—The inference he makes from their firm and stedfast adherence to that precise form of words, is, that I am certainly an apostate from the Secession-testimony; because I have presumed to deny the propriety of still using that form, without ma-

† N. B. The Prefacer expressly says,—“Measures of light and conviction concerning known and acknowledged sin and duty;” referring, as the grammatical construction necessarily implies, to former covenant-transactions.



king proper additions and alterations, in order to accommo-  
date it to the *present time*, so as it may be a *present oath*; and  
because I have objected against the *reduplicating clause* in their  
13. bond. [p. 373.] In answer to this heavy charge, I shall on-  
ly plead the authority of the said *Presbytery*, who have shew-  
ed, that the continued renovation of a covenant in the *same*  
*form*, and in the *same words*, is, (1.) IMPRACTICABLE!  
(2.) ABURD! (3.) UNREASONABLE! And, (4.) UNPRECE-  
DENTED! See their *Answers* to Mr Nairn.—The world may  
judge, what sort of Seceders they are, who obstinately per-  
svere in distinguishing themselves by an attachment to *unrea-*  
*sonable, absurd, impracticable, and unprecedented measures*!—  
And further, they may judge, what *title* the Antiburghers  
have to be reckoned the *successors to the Associate Presbytery*,  
in the work of covenanting, while they manage it in a form  
which *that Presbytery* has proved to be altogether *unrea-*  
*sonable, absurd, impracticable, and unprecedented*!—Goodly  
*successors*. Your succession, like that of the night to the day,  
is a manifest *counter-part* to the Associate Presbytery's  
principles.

13. Mr Gib tells us, the Antiburgher-synod “are of opi-  
“ nion, that the public corruptions which have taken place  
“ since 1743, are still *materially the same corruptions*, (in an  
“ incorrigible progress thereof), which have been specified in  
“ their acknowledgment of sins; yea, the *Prefacer* himself  
“ (*Survey* p. 35) calls them,—*The manifest progress of the*  
“ *evils that occasioned the Secession*.” [p. 376.]

14. Remarks: (1.) As there is no new thing under the sun; no-  
thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new; so it may be  
expected, the Antiburghers will never have a louder call to  
enlarge their acknowledgment, than they have had since  
1743. (2.) It can be proved, that their Synod has added  
many causes of falling to these contained in *that* acknowledg-  
ment, since the year 1747; and has continued them from  
year to year. Now I beg leave to ask, why they profess to  
mourn over these other standing causes of divine displeasure,  
while they do not solemnly engage to contend and testify a-  
gainst them? (3.) I certainly own “the manifest progress  
“ of the evils that occasioned the Secession;” but it never  
entered into my head, that any body could think there are  
no other public evils in our land.—Pity restrains the contempt  
such a way of reasoning deserves. Mr Gib performs as well  
as his cause will permit.

14. He says with an air of triumph,—“One thing is plain;  
“ that the Antiburghers, still resting in their original form  
“ of covenanting must be very disagreeable to the *Prefacer*:  
“ because

"because it evidently shuts up him and his party from a considerable advantage to their cause, even from any occasion to declaim against the Antiburgher-synod for novelty in the manner of covenanting." [p. 376.] P. 38

Remarks. (1.) In one point of view, we may consider this conduct of theirs as an extraordinary example of *self-denial*. They will rather pretend to an *unreasonable, absurd, IMPRACTICABLE*, and *unprecedented* attempt, even to *renew former covenants in the same form and words*, than give "any occasion to declaim against them for novelty in the manner of covenanting!" (2.) In another light it may be considered, as a very prudent expedient to distress the poor Burghers, who hereby lose "a considerable advantage to their cause." Yet, (3.) I cannot tell how to believe, that Mr Gib should give his consent to a measure so exceedingly cautious, and so detrimental to the cause of the Burghers. Mr Gib is well known to be a most generous, open adversary. It is no secret, and I am not ashamed to confess the truth, that his unguarded manner of writing on every subject that has come in his way, has been of "CONSIDERABLE ADVANTAGE" to his opponents. For my own part I sincerely declare, I cannot conceive how I should have been able to find materials for so large a vindication of my *Preface on covenanting*, if Mr Gib had not obligingly helped me to them, by the *spirit, principles, and fallacy* of his *Defense*, &c.—If I must be opposed, it is both a *pleasure*, and an *ADVANTAGE* to have Mr Gib for my opponent.

15. He asks,—“Can the [Seceding] covenant now be justly said to have ONE GRAIN MORE of a *reference* unto, or “*reduplication* upon the confession of sins, than it had in “*Nehemiah’s* time; when the covenant was made [Neh. ix. “38.] expressly *because of all this*, in the preceding confession?” [p. 374. 375.] To this question I answer in the affirmative, and shall prove it thus: (1.) Seceding covenanters “*promise and swear*, that they shall contend and testify “*against—the other evils named in the above confession of sins*.” These are the words of their bond; and it is manifest, the conscientious swearer of it ought to consider *these evils* in the same light, as if the confession of them actually stood in the bond itself. (2.) The Jewish covenanters in *Nehemiah’s* time, did not consider the evils they confessed in that light at all. This is evident, both from the words Mr Gib has quoted, Neh. ix. 38. *BECAUSE of all this, we make a sure covenant*: and also from the *tenor* of their covenant, which is recorded at large in the following chapter, beginning at the 29th verse. Had it been said, *AGAINST all these sins we make a sure covenant*,

ment, Mr Gib might have asked his question with propriety ; but I cannot imagine any tolerable reason for it, as the words stand in our Bibles. Perhaps he only intended to try, how far the credulity of *his friends* might be carried upon the credit of his word, even contrary to the evidence of their own eyes: for I suppose he could not be quite so weak as to hope to persuade *one indifferent reader*, that there was any *reduplication* in the covenant of the Jews.

16. Mr Gib shews, that we ought to *confess the iniquity of our fathers*; as well as *our own iniquity*. [p. 377.]—I firmly believe this; and I wish two principal ends of doing so were particularly attended to; namely, to vindicate the justice of God in punishing them for their sins, and to caution us against the like practices. Lev. xxvi. 40. 41. 42. But what is this to his purpose, for proving that we ought to make a religious vow, binding our souls to *testify and contend against the sins of our fathers*? or against any other sins than *our own*? Mr Gib cannot prove from *scripture-examples*, that such vows are so much as warranted, far less can he prove that they are commanded.

17. The last thing I shall take any notice of at present in Mr Gib's *Defence*, &c. relates to a complaint I exhibited against the Anaburghers, that "they insist on *MANY antiquated facts* in their confession of sins, which have comparatively little influence on *present* conduct. [p. 378. 379.]—By *antiquated facts* I understand such as have little or no *PRESENT* influence and operation against the interests of true religion, to injure truth, or to hurt its friends, in the *present* age. I will not presume to determine, whether the terms are well chosen, to express this idea; but *this* was my idea, when I used the expression. Now I affirm, that there are many *such facts* insisted upon in the confession of sins; and that facts of this kind have *comparatively* little influence upon the *present* conduct of Seceders.—If examples of this sort do not strike an attentive reader of *that* confession, I hope to be able to give him all necessary satisfaction, in a future performance, on the subject of *our solemn covenants*, which is now preparing for the press.

So much for Mr Gib's *Defence of solemn covenanting*.—When his *Appendix* in the Second Volume comes to hand, I must take the correction therein applied to the *Survey*, into serious consideration; and maturely weigh its importance and argument, in order to determine the part I should act concerning it.—It is a considerable advantage to me in this cause, that Mr Gib is my adversary; and that I know the depth of his invention, the boldness of his assertions, the manner



manner of his reasoning, and the principles of his philosophy. Nothing pains me so much on this subject as the *consequences* arising to *his party*, from the *necessity* they are under, of adopting his apologetical and acrimonious defences of their conduct and situation. I have been of opinion, for many years, that some of his brethren must be at least as well qualified to do honour to their cause before the world as Mr *Gib*, who has long been their champion; but as this gentleman assures me, that he “reckons an endeavour to display the rise, state, and maintenance of the Secession-testimony, peculiarly incumbent on himself, from the *early* and *special* concern he has had in the Secession-cause, giving him occasion for particular acquaintance with it, more than any other member now remaining in the Associate Synod \* , it is possible my charity has been too great. However, time will shew, whether some of them, even with inferior abilities to Mr *Gib*, may not think themselves called out to succour their learned advocate, in opposition to the present *Display of the spirit, principles, and fallacy of his Defence of solemn covenanting*, lest a CARELESS reader should seem to have some reason to say, *How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle, and the weapons of war perished.*

\* Preface to the *Display of the Secession-testimony*, p. 6. 7.

T H E E N D.



